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The Evangelistic Message of Protestantism

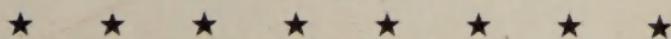


BY EIGHT METHODIST BISHOPS

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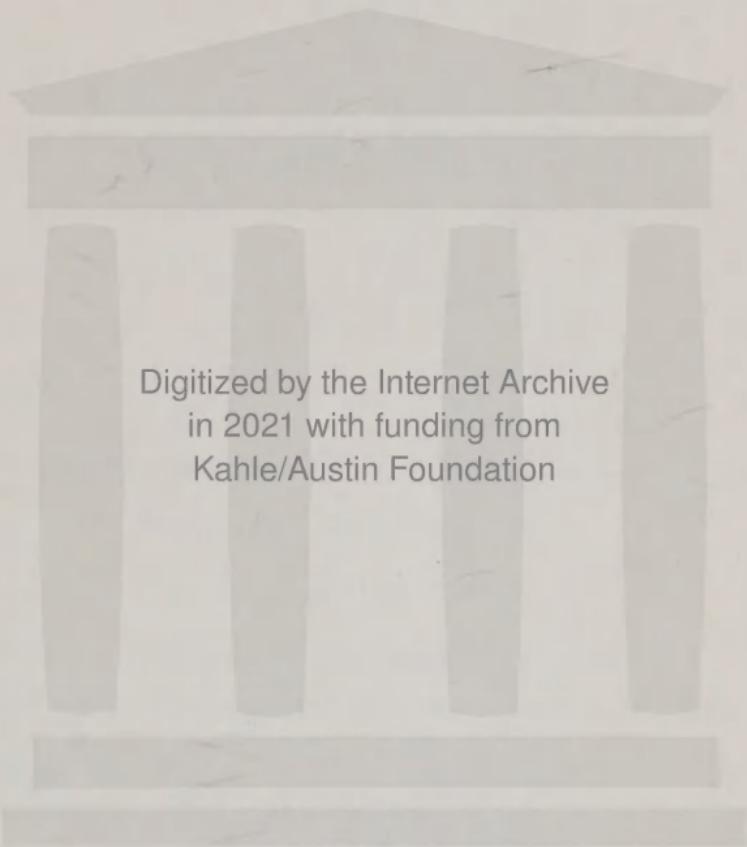




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The Evangelistic Message of Protestantism

A SERIES OF MESSAGES

BY EIGHT OF THE

BISHOPS OF THE METHODIST CHURCH

R. R. Rawley

T I D I N G S
1908 Grand Avenue
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The first seven messages in this volume were delivered to appreciative audiences at "The Hour of Evangelism" during the session of the General Conference in Boston. A change in Conference schedule prevented the eighth message from being delivered, and likewise a message on "Protestantism and the World Parish" by Bishop James C. Baker.

This little volume can become significant in proportion as ministers and laymen rise up as "men of God," exercise their great freedom in Christ, and become evangelists for him, testifying to his redeeming love.

What we have felt and seen
With confidence we tell;
And publish to the sons of men
The signs infallible.

—Charles Wesley

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CHAPTER I

THE PROTESTANT SPIRIT

by Bishop Fred P. Corson

In order for us to be good Protestants it is just as essential that we should understand why we do things as it is that we should be faithful in the performance of the things that we are directed and urged to do. A great deal of any person's life is carried on by momentum and habit, and very frequently we spend our days moving in circles that we have been accustomed to, without any great thought as to the reason why we should move in that direction or the purpose for which we are doing what we do. We need to re-emphasize the importance of knowledge as well as of action in the whole matter of our relationship to our church and to the larger Protestantism.

Some years ago in a small village in Russia it was observed that when the natives passed a certain spot in the town where there was a blank wall, every one of them bowed and crossed himself. No one in that village seemed to know why that particular and peculiar habit existed, but everybody observed the custom. Year after year and generation after generation these people passing that blank spot in the wall bowed and crossed themselves, until in renovating the estate the outward covering of that old wall was scraped off and it was discovered that underneath that spot was a picture of the Virgin Mary. Here was a community where the force of habit and a vague sense of possible significance preserved a custom for which no reason could be given. This is somewhat the situation with regard to the present generation of Protestants.

We are rearing in this world a generation of Protestants who are carrying out the forms and the customs of our faith without having any direct and convincing knowledge of what it is all about. No one who deals with Protestants, as those of us who

are in positions either of educational or of church leadership do, but realizes that today, time after time, we are put at a disadvantage because we have not taught our children the fundamental principles of our faith.

There are a great number of preachers who would be hard put to it for a clear answer if someone seriously questioned them concerning the fundamentals of their faith and the purpose and the reason for the things that we as Protestant ministers urge our people to do. It would be like a preacher who, when asked by a member of his congregation what was the difference between cherubim and seraphim, replied after being stumped for a second, "Well, I'll tell you, it is true that once they did have a difference, but they have made it up."

Now one of the dangers of our Protestantism today is the fact that so many people who are a part of our great Protestant brotherhood think that fundamentally there is no difference between our faith and the other faiths of the world. That has been responsible for the development of a false philosophy of religion in life, and behind that false philosophy of religion in life there has gone a kind of wavering in Protestant loyalty, a demolition of missionary spirit, and a wave of indifference towards evangelism which has had its effect upon every phase of church life. Moreover, it has brought us sadness and disappointment as we have endeavored to carry out the mission of the Founder of our great Christian faith who made it imperative that we should teach this gospel to all people and lead them to the feet of our Master.

It is appropriate, therefore, and very important that we should give thought and consideration to the fundamental tenets of our doctrine and to the reason for the faith that is within us. We need constantly to be reminding ourselves of the principles of our doctrine which meant so much to our fathers and produced martyrs of the church, martyrs whose sacrifices made possible the abundant fruits of our joy. Also, our chil-

dren should be taught these principles without which they will be helpless in facing the world of our day. Furthermore, the world itself needs to be confronted with some new great and dynamic movement that will lift people up to a fresh sense of their importance and of the worthwhileness of giving themselves to a cause that in the end can transform this world.

Therefore, in a very brief way and suggestive way, let us think of the spirit of our Protestantism. We ought to be proud of that spirit. There is nothing in the whole history of Protestantism that we need to be ashamed of.

Sometimes I get a little tired of the fact that whenever a Protestant group comes together it thinks that it must publicly confess its sins. Of course we have sinned. We have fallen far short of the glory of God. We have disappointed God and oftentimes we have closed the doors of opportunity, but the time has come when, if Protestantism is to be a positive and constructive movement in this world, we must lay aside this negative attitude which always presents us in a kind of a defensive light to the public, and once again we must hold up the great cardinal truths of our doctrine and the place they have had in the life of men in the world. I think that never again will I participate in a program which announces its theme to be "What Is Wrong with the Church?" I will be very glad to participate in a program which considers what the church can do today with what it has to work with—its heritage, its numberless blessings, its opportunity for the betterment of mankind.

SPIRIT OF UNITY

There are five distinctive emphases in the spirit of Protestantism, and the first of them is *the spirit of unity*. This doctrine has been very greatly maligned in the past few years. You will find people who will be much surprised if you point out to them that the Spirit of Protestantism is a spirit of unity.

There is diversity in our Protestantism, to be sure, but we have demonstrated to the world that there can be diversity in form while there is unity in spirit.

If we were to make a survey of the unity in spirit that exists among Protestants, we would be greatly amazed by the amount of unity and of co-operation that we would find in the Protestant endeavor. After all, we are not so greatly divided as many people think we are. Over 80 per cent of the membership of Protestantism resides in about twelve or thirteen denominations; and, when you stop to consider all the things that Protestants are doing together today, you will understand that the element of diversity which has been held up so frequently and erroneously as the base unpardonable cardinal sin of Protestantism today is at the very heart and center of our Protestant faith, and that it is the incentive for Protestant endeavor in what we do. The right of private judgment, which will be discussed separately in this series, is the most priceless heritage that our Protestant forefathers have given us.

We cannot have the right of private judgment (exercised as it must be exercised in the selection of our form of worship, in the attitudes that we take towards our service in the world for Christ, and in the discussions that we make) if we attempt to put all Protestants into one mold and make them conform to one way of worship, to one expression of that way, and to one final doctrine about that way. Our diversity must be interpreted in terms of individuality, and there is nothing incompatible between individuality and unity.

Paul, in his letter to the Romans, pointed out that there are many members in the body and every member has its distinct service and way in which to express itself, but that they are all one. Just so, the church must have many members, many evidences of its expression in the life that it lives, but essentially the church must be one in Christ.

The great sin of Protestantism today is not in diversity. We would lose tremendously if we took a monopolistic attitude toward our Protestantism and tried to bring all Protestants into one form and one mold. The great sin of Protestantism today is the exclusiveness which crops up here and there and separates us and makes it impossible for us to co-operate. The hope of the Protestant movement in Europe lies in the free churches which are outside of the state churches and the *Landeskirche*, as they call them, but have an element within them of spontaneity which element itself is of purging value. In Europe Protestantism reaches out with a sense of the possibility of the coming of a new life in a part of the world that has very little hope left in it unless the church rises up to take leadership once again.

So let us focus our thoughts upon this sin of exclusiveness which is within Protestantism. This sin says that unless you are ordained in a certain way your ordination is invalid. This sin says that unless you come into the church in a certain way your membership in the church does not constitute a saving relationship to the fellowship of Christ. This sin of exclusiveness looks down upon those who do not express their religion in the same terms and by the same manner that we may be expressing it. This is the kind of thing that Jesus spoke against; this is what he warned his disciples about, when they came to him expecting to be commended for what they had done when they found a man who did not follow after them. This man was preaching the gospel and the disciples bad him to stop preaching, but the Master chided them, and said, "If he is preaching my gospel, even though it is not in your form, he is for me and not against me."

Yes, there is a spirit of unity, a unity in the body of Christ, a unity in our objective, which is a very precious thing in Protestantism, and this unity is most effectively advanced by the attitudes and forms of diversity which have sprung up in the

expression of our faith and in the accomplishment of its objective.

SPIRIT OF FREEDOM

The second element in the spirit of Protestantism is *the spirit of freedom*. If there were no other incentive to be Protestants in this day, certainly the incentive to promote a movement which guarantees essential freedom in the world is worth while for everyone who seeks the betterment of mankind and the advancement of the world. A great deal is being said today about freedom—about political freedom, social freedom, and religious freedom—and we must pause in discussing this matter in order to understand what we mean by the term “freedom.”

The Communists will tell you that there is religious freedom in the communistic countries, but when you come to examine what *they* mean by freedom and by democracy, and put it beside what *you* mean by freedom and by democracy, you will find that there is a vast difference in meaning, such a difference that you cannot recognize the freedom that they are talking about, even though they use the same terms that you use. To be sure, in certain sections of the world where totalitarian government rules there is a kind of freedom in religion. It is freedom to exist, but such freedom is not enough for religion. What we must have is what Protestantism fought for. What it has kept alive in this world is not alone the freedom to exist but the freedom to be active and freedom to achieve; the freedom to express our religion as we believe God has put it in our hearts to express it; the freedom that sends us forth to testify and to witness to our faith, regardless of what may be the common and accepted form either of religion or social or political life in the community; the freedom of our mind to think what we believe is right to think, and to have no shackles of doctrine or form that force us into a kind of mold in thinking and prevent

us from expressing within ourselves the faith that we believe to be right.

The spirit of Protestantism is needed in the world today to maintain this kind of freedom, not alone for communistic and totalitarian countries that are under fascist rule, but for our own America where all too frequently we are selling our birth-right and are frittering away the opportunities and blessed privileges for which our fathers died, because we do not understand this value of freedom and the thing that makes it possible for one to worship according to the dictates of his own conscience.

Protestantism has a responsibility to the world at this point. It is a responsibility not alone to make it possible for those who think as we do to express themselves, but it is also a responsibility to make it possible for people who in sincerity, even though they differ from us, have the same opportunity to express themselves. We do not need to fear the result at any time when we can bring the argument in the minds of a people to the level where they are using their brain as God gave it to them, and, in response to the dictates of their best thinking, have their hearts act as they believe God would have them act in the world of which they are a part. This is a blessing of Protestantism which we have inherited from our fathers. It is a great and awful obligation upon us in this day to hand it on to our children and to make it possible for all people everywhere in the world.

THE SPIRIT OF INTENSITY

In the third place, there is in Protestantism *a spirit of intensity*.

We had over at Drew in the years gone by a very clever, able and brilliant professor of Homiletics. His name was Upham. Dr. Upham said once that there are only two classes of Chris-

tians in this world—the Quakers and the earthquakers—and he said that the Protestants and the Methodists were the earthquakers.

The time has come when we can no longer sit on the sidelines of life and take a doctrinaire and dilletanté attitude towards these great fundamental truths of life that have to do with a man's spirit. We are cursed today by a popular belief that by some kind of academic argument we can arrive at sacred conclusions which will transform life and make it over and by a "concept," to use a popular word, bring peace and good will and prosperity and well-being to this world and to mankind. We need to stir the convictions of men. If we could bring our Methodism to a place where Methodists had convictions about their faith, the great problems that are distressing us would melt away.

We have a wonderful opportunity in this world of ours. The doors are open everywhere to the Christian gospel. God is calling us to a new crusade, and it is a crusade for Christ, his Son, and as we move forward in this Crusade, God is opening the doors in Europe, and in the Orient, and in Africa, and everywhere we turn.

Why cannot we go through those doors? Why must we continue to close those doors, one after another, because we are not ready to go through? I'll tell you the reason. It is because we have lived in a church that has grown cold. We have lived in a church that has put more emphasis upon a detached attitude towards faith than upon the actual practice of faith. We have lived in a world that has interpreted belief to be a kind of intellectual process that has no great imperative behind it which sends us forth to do the will of God. When we can transform our belief into conviction, these opportunities that concern us and these problems that sometimes fill our hearts with distress and pessimism will all fade away.

Mr. Gladstone was asked on one occasion, looking back over his long period in dealing with the public, that if he could have just one wish about the public, what would it be? and Mr. Gladstone, without hesitating, said this: "If I could have one wish about the public, just one wish for them, it would be this—that men's beliefs should become their convictions." Well, my friends, if God were to give us just one chance to make a wish that would come true about our Methodism, I think that would be my wish.

I look yonder over my Area in Methodism. It is an Area that has many consecrated people, people who are doing the work of God in a marvelous way, but I know that if I could get all the Methodists in my Area to make their beliefs their convictions, tremendous good would result for them and for the world.

That is the real meaning of the word "Protestantism." Protestantism has suffered by a too narrow interpretation of its meaning. To be sure, the word "to protest" means to be against some things, but we have passed out of the period when this Protestant church of ours can exist wholly by being against things. There are a lot of things in this world that we ought to be against, and pray God that we will be more against them in the years to come than we have in the years immediately past, but the words "Protestant" and "protest" means "to be *for*, to speak *for*, to witness *for*, to stand *for*," as well as to stand against. The time has come when we, in a constructive and forward way, need to present our faith regarding the things in this life and in the life to come, the things for which we stand. "This do and thou shalt live" should be the pattern of our life and message.

The Boston Globe paid a very high compliment editorially to the Methodists when the editor said that the Methodists had never been known to be timid or fearful. Well, that's the spirit of Protestantism! Thank God, our Methodism has been in the

forefront in expressing this particular phase of our Protestantism. When we do become timid, when we do become fearful, when we begin to make our statements on the basis of how they will affect the people out there, those people against whom the statements are made, without regard to truth and to right and the fact that we must obey God rather than men, then it's time to start to pray fervently for our own conversion.

We have a religion that must be expressed. We can express it in many ways, but whatever we do, let us remember that we are not real Protestants unless we become intense about it.

THE SPIRIT OF EFFICIENCY

In Protestantism there is likewise *the spirit of efficiency*. I do not admit for one minute that this great Protestant church of ours, though it is doing its work in many denominations and in many ways, is an inefficient organization.

I would like to talk about Methodism at this point, because I believe that Methodism and The Methodist Church is the most efficient church in the world. I was talking not long ago with one of the great industrialists of America. He is at the head of a very large, prosperous, and efficient organization, and he is one of the top leaders not only in his field, but in all industry; and he's a churchman! He's not a Methodist; he's a Presbyterian. He said to me, "Bishop, the time may come when all the denominations will be together. When they all get together they will not take the name of Methodist, but they'll take some form of Methodism, because it is the most efficient and effective form in all Protestantism." Now the reason for that is fundamental to all Protestantism and not to Methodism alone.

The reason that Protestantism is effective is because it has always sought first to understand what is needed, and then how to meet that need. Protestants are not bound to the past, nor are they victims of novelty. There is a kind of pragmatism about

Protestantism that looks out on the world and sees what needs to be done, and then, with what it has, goes out to meet that need in the practical and most effective way.

“To serve the present age,
Our calling to fulfill;
Or let all our powers engage
To do the Master’s will!”

Charles Wesley was speaking to this day when he uttered those words, and we gather up the spirit of Protestantism when we understand that our ministry is not tied to a dead past. Our ministry is not dependent upon the jumping hither and yon to meet the appetite for novelty, but our ministry and our mission is fulfilled when in practical and efficient ways we go out to serve the present day.

THE SPIRIT OF DEPENDENCY

Now, finally, in Protestantism there is likewise *the spirit of dependency*, and I come to the end of this message with the words of the one who made all of it possible for us, Martin Luther. We sometimes sing that great hymn of Martin Luther—and I wonder if we stop to consider its meaning as sufficiently as we ought, especially that verse in which he said:

“Did we in our own strength confide,
Our striving would be losing;
Were not the right One on our side,
The One of God’s own choosing.”

There is where we in this day often fail. We are living in a world that confides in its own strength; we are living in a world that makes its decision without reference to God; we are attempting to adjust this church of ours to a social pattern where all of the major, as well as the minor, concerns of men are con-

sidered solely on the strength and wisdom that *men* have, and not on the strength and wisdom that God has.

Martin Luther, in his day, faced the same problem; he faced it from a different angle. Men were depending upon the church or upon an office in the ministry; or they were depending upon the forms of ecclesiasticism or the accumulation of works, that by that accumulation of good works they could find favor and pardon with their God. Martin Luther said all these things must take secondary place in our salvation, because our dependency is upon the Spirit, and unless we have faith to depend upon God we cannot hope for the reward that God has prepared for all who love Him and all who serve Him either in this life or in the life to come.

Our dependency today is not upon a great church organization; it is not upon buildings; it is not upon equipment; it is not upon the maintenance of methods. All of these are important, and I do not discount them. But our dependency is first and fundamentally upon God, and until we bring this great church of ours to his cross, and until we take our stand there at the foot of that cross, and until we understand that in this world of ours with its problems, its burdens, its opportunities, and its obligations, we have nothing to cling to save the cross, we will not rise up to take our place as men of God, to do his will and to bring the kingdoms of this world to the feet of our Lord.

When Martin Luther received the pope's legate, at that time when he was withdrawing from the church and when it looked as if the Roman Catholic church would lose all Germany, the pope's legate assumed an attitude by which he thought he would overcome little Martin Luther. With disdain in his voice, he looked at Martin Luther and said, "Martin Luther, who are you, and what do you have behind you and your movement? There is more power in the pope's little finger than you can muster in yourself or with all the German princes, and all the people who are now saying that they stand behind you in your

movement. . . . Martin Luther, remember this, that before long the German princes, all of them, will forsake you and flee, and you will be left alone to fight the Roman church, and in that hour, Martin Luther, where will you be?" Martin Luther brought himself up and looked into the face of the pope's legate, and said, "Sir, then as now, I will be in the hands of Almighty God."

Let us pray that this church of ours, confronted as it may be with persecution, and with an indifference which sometimes is worse than persecution, and with tasks greater than our human strength, will take courage in the fact that then as now we can rest in the hands of Almighty God, and abiding in his strength, we can go out to achieve in this world the mission for which he has brought us to this hour.

CHAPTER II

THE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES

by Bishop J. C. Broomfield

In my reading of current religious literature I have been impressed with the lack of material dealing with the authority of the Scriptures. A few months ago a new book came to my desk containing 39 "master sermons" covering the Protestant era. In these 39 sermons there was not even a suggestion of the authority of the Word of God. Moreover, about two years ago, a large volume was issued dealing with contemporary religious thought. In it were articles by 68 Protestant leaders around the world. In that great group of articles there was only one that had any relation to our theme—it was entitled, "The Authority of the Old Testament."

This apparent silence is in vivid contrast with what I found in the early years of my ministry. At that time there was vigorous widespread discussion of the authority of the Scriptures. The discussion grew out of the beginnings of the controversy between fundamentalists and modernists. That discussion has largely subsided. The silence is not born of an acceptance of the authority of the Scriptures, but rather of indifference to the Scriptures.

In the first message Bishop Corson said that the outstanding need in Protestantism in these days is to convert belief into conviction. This need will be met in proportion to our acceptance of the authority of the Scriptures.

May I define briefly our theme.

By the Scriptures we mean the writings of the Old and New Testaments. The one is the Bible of Jesus, and the other is filled with quotations from the Bible. I think the difference between the Testaments is the difference between the letter E and the

letter U. The Old Testament enfolds, shuts in, the New; and the New Testament unfolds, makes plain, the Old.

By the authority of the Scriptures we mean the God-established and God-commanded imperatives for human life found therein. We are thinking therefore of what God has commanded, rather than what scholarship has interpreted. Truth is one thing, and interpretation of truth is another. It was always true that the sun was stationary and the earth revolved on its axis, but there was a period in which human interpretation said otherwise.

There are three things we must remember—first, the Bible is the Word of God; second, God is ultimate authority; and third, divine authority is inherent in the Bible.

IGNORANCE AND INDIFFERENCE

Since my retirement in 1944 I have held revival services in 17 states. In my many contacts with our people, I have been impressed with their biblical illiteracy; and this impression includes many of our ministers.

I have made tests everywhere I have gone, of the intimacy of our people with the Scriptures. In very few instances could I have given them a passing grade. The response of many of our preachers reminded me of what Bishop Mead said to me shortly before his death. He was telling me of his participation in the ordination of his son, who was being received into one of our New York Conferences. (He was of the third generation of Meads to hold membership in that Conference.) Said the young man to his father: "Dad, I have graduated from the Seminary, and am now being received into the Conference in which you were ordained. The difference between us, as I see it, on the day of our ordination is this—when you were ordained you *knew* the Bible; today I know *about* the Bible." There is a vast difference between living at headquarters, where you have firsthand knowledge, and staying out on the circum-

ference listening to what is being said concerning headquarters.

God says: "My Word"—not the interpretations given My Word—but "My Word" in the experience of the individual, as well as in the life of a congregation, "shall not return unto me void, but it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

Growing out of this widespread ignorance of the Scriptures, there is general indifference to their authority; and as a result people lack adequate motivation in their religious life, and are unable to defend themselves in the hour of temptation. Our only sure weapon of defense is the one Christ used in his temptation—"the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

The only thing the devil is afraid of is the sharp edge of this sword. I have often wondered what Christ would have done in his wilderness temptation if he had not been able to say, "It is written," and then to quote what was written.

CHART AND COMPASS

Reflecting the regard of Moses and the prophets for the authority of the Scriptures, we find this recurring phrase running through their writings, "The word of the Lord came unto me, saying. . . ." In Zechariah we find it eight times, in Jeremiah 34 times, in Ezekiel 36 times, and in the Pentateuch 95 times. In similar proportion we find it in the other books of the Bible; hence our claim that authority is inherent in the Scriptures; they have it in their own right.

What the Supreme Court is in the life of the nation, the Bible ought to be in the life of the Christian. Its deliverances must be accepted as final. When it speaks we must keep quiet. I love the eighth verse of the eighty-fifth Psalm. When David had heard the last word of advice from those around him, he says—"I will hear what God the Lord will speak." To him the voice of God was the Supreme Court of moral and spiritual appeal.

What the Bureau of Standards is in the life of the United States, the Word of God ought to be in the life of the Christian. The Bureau is authority as to weights and measures; even so the Bible determines Christian attitudes and registers moral values.

What the North Star is to the navigator on the high seas for location and guidance, the Scriptures ought to be for the Christian.

What the chart and compass are to the mariner, the Bible ought to be to a follower of Christ for spiritual navigation.

When I think of the many cross currents that are raging all about us, and the resultant whirlpool amid which we live, I am convinced of our need of the Word of God to hold us to the course, and enable us to navigate to advantage.

No ALTERNATIVE

If what I have been saying is true, then our approach to the Scriptures cannot be elective. There are no alternatives from which to choose. Of course, men do undertake to find alternatives. They did it in Christ's day, and they are doing it now. In Mark 7:7 we hear Christ say: "Howbeit in vain they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." And in Mark 7:9 he says: "Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition."

To those who were seeking alternatives in the church at Colosse, Paul writes: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy, and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." So men do elect to their own disadvantage.

The Scriptures are God's "take it or leave it"—and we have no choice in the matter.

The question naturally arises as to the cause of man's unwillingness to accept the authority of the Scriptures. The answer

is sin in the life. It is interesting to note that sin began when the reality and the authority of the word of God was first challenged. That challenge is found in Genesis 3:1. It appears in the first question found in the Bible: "Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree in the garden?" By indirection, through creating doubt, the serpent attacked the reality and authority of what God said. This method of attack has worked so well ever since, the devil has never been under the necessity of revising it.

FOUR CHALLENGES

Today, we find that the authority of the Scriptures is challenged from at least four different quarters. These challenges seem to have been anticipated in the writing of the Scriptures, for the Scriptures come to their own defense.

There is the challenge of *materialism*. I am not thinking of philosophic materialism as it relates to the cosmos, but to experiential materialism as it relates to life.

Jesus was face to face with the challenge of experiential materialism in his first temptation in the wilderness. This was an old challenge and was answered in Deut. 8:3: "Man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live."

Faced with this materialistic challenge dealing with life, Christ recognized the authority of the Scriptures, and said: "It is written." How fortunate for him in his hour of need, to be able to recall what he had learned in other days from the sacred scroll! He was able to go upstairs to his mind to find what he needed for the defense of his heart.

And so to the materialist the Bible says, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

SECULARISM

The second challenge comes from what is called *secularism*. What is secularism? Secularism, in the last analysis, is "trying to build life on the things that derive from life." It means staying within the human circle.

In Luke 12:15 we find the answer to this challenge. Here Christ is saying "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." I often think of the One who issued that warning. He began life in a borrowed cradle, and closed life in a borrowed grave, and in between these borrowings said: "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." And yet that life lived under such economic pressure, is the one life that has blessed all the generations since, and will to the end.

The third challenge, *rationalism*, comes from those who refuse to begin with divine revelation, and demand that they begin with reason.

Again the Scriptures accept the challenge and frequently we read therein—"The just shall live by faith." Reason is a function of the mind; faith is a power of the soul. Faith really begins where reason quits. So the Bible, in its emphasis on faith, anticipates the challenge of the rationalist.

The challenge of *humanism* is more antagonistic to the authority of the Scriptures than many of us realize. Humanism puts man himself at the center of things, where he undertakes to lift himself by his own bootstraps. To meet this challenge we read in Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

In I Cor. 3:11 Paul also meets the challenge of the humanist: "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Zechariah meets a similar challenge when he

writes: "This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." (Zech. 4:6.)

WESLEY'S DAY AND OURS

These four challenges to the authority of the Scriptures are not new. They were heard in biblical times, and John Wesley was no stranger to them.

Recently I was interested in a study of the parallelism between John Wesley's day and our day. He encountered difficulties similar to ours. There were three things in Wesley's day akin to three things in our day. First, a remarkable advance in scientific achievement. For the first time we hear of Newton, and Halley, and Flamsted, and Lavoiseir—great names in the realm of natural science, and astronomy, and chemistry.

Second, there were catastrophic political changes growing out of the French Revolution, the American Revolution, German Nationalism under Frederick the Great, and the outreach of the British Empire under Pitt.

Third, there was a change in front in religion. Leaders in science were no longer willing to start with revelation; they insisted on beginning at the point of their own discoveries, and called in question the assumptions of the Christian faith. Theology to them was just another science. Out of these grew the beginnings of the rationalistic movement, led by Bacon and Herbert and Hobbes, with its mechanistic and materialistic interpretation of creation. This was followed with the beginnings of Deism and its claims that God was non-revelatory, and non-immanent; and this in turn was followed with the beginnings of skepticism, whose leading exponent was Hume.

All these flourished in the first half of the eighteenth century. Of that period, Laine wrote, "A stranger visiting Britain would see only a choking vapor of arguments, controversies and sermons."

Confronted with these challenges Wesley did not undertake to defend Christianity, or the Christian faith—he proclaimed them. His famous testimony was—"Homo unius Libre"—I am a man of one Book. He said: "We are resolved to be Bible Christians at all costs, and to preach with all our might old Bible Christianity."

There were those, of course, who differed with him, such as Berkeley, Clarke, Warburton, and Butler, who undertook to meet science and philosophy on their own ground, and got nowhere. In the meantime, Wesley, believing in the authority of the Scriptures, unsheathed the sword of the Spirit, and led in the great evangelical movement.

It is not difficult to see the parallel in these days, in science, and politics and religion, as well as in rationalism, humanism, and agnosticism. Too long has the church in our day presented an apologetic rather than unsheathing the sword, which is the Word of God.

CHRISTIAN TOLERATION AND RELIGIOUS DEMOCRACY

There are two phrases being used in these days that challenge the authority of the Scriptures, and give me concern. They are so idealistic that one is liable to be misunderstood if he undertakes to find fault with them. The one is Christian toleration, and the other is religious democracy. Are there any other well-sounding phrases that have in them more danger for Protestantism than these two?

If you review the application of the first phrase in the past twenty-five years, invariably you will find that Christian toleration has meant Protestant compromise. Moreover, religious democracy too often has meant the dethronement of Christ, the Lord.

About twenty years ago a book was written by a noted Jewish Rabbi, entitled, *Religion in a Changing World*. I was then

president of the General Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church. Our Book Agent sent me a copy, and solicited an endorsement. In the heart of the book I found this phrase, "We will never have religious democracy as long as Christianity remains imperialistic." I immediately wrote the author, and said: "Rabbi, I am not facetious in the question I am asking; I am in dead earnest. Will you tell me how I can be anything else as a Christian than an imperialist when my Lord was an imperialist of the imperialists? He affirmed: 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me.' How can I be anything else than an imperialist when Saint Paul, speaking of Jesus, said, 'There is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved'?"

In his answer, the only defense the Rabbi offered was this: "The best of modern scholarship doesn't credit Jesus with saying, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life.'" He thus attacked the integrity and the authenticity of the words of Jesus. For that reason I am afraid of the phrases—religious democracy, and Christian toleration. I don't propose to be any more tolerant than was my Lord. If you know the four Gospels, he was tolerant with publicans and sinners, but not with the religious leaders who differed with him. Neither do I propose to be a party to a religious democracy that dethrones my Lord, and makes him one among many. To me he is supreme; he is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last.

THE BIBLE AN AUTHORITY

The Bible is the one authority we have on God, and Christ, and the Holy Ghost. All we know of the Godhead is found in the Scriptures. The Scriptures are the authority on sin, redemption, repentance, salvation, prayer, stewardship, heaven and hell. In these days we are not hearing much about sin and hell, and yet the Bible is full of references to them.

In the Old Testament the word "sin" appears 486 times, and in the New Testament 202 times. Thus 688 times the blessed Book warns us about sin. In Genesis 4:7 God warns Cain, "If thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door." In Jeremiah 17:1 we read, "The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond: it is graven upon the table of the heart." God says that sin is the transgression of the law and that its wages is death. To my brethren in the ministry may I say that I believe you are under moral obligation to preserve in your preaching the same proportion in your emphasis on sin and hell that God provides in his Word.

How can we give the Holy Ghost his chance to exercise his function, which is "to convict of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment," unless we preach on sin and hell?

If we soft-pedal sin we deny the Holy Ghost his chance; and the man who soft-pedals sin, must soft-pedal redemption, and he who does that robs the Lord of his Calvary glory.

Growing out of the now-abandoned mechanistic philosophies of life and the behavioristic psychologies, we still have with us fantastic definitions of sin, such as—"Sin is an upward stumble in man's progress"; "sin is a necessary moral purgative"; "sin is psychic rebellion"; "sin is an unwarranted interference with the smooth on-going social processes"; "sin is an outward expression of inward biochemical activity." Who gave us these definitions? Writers in the realm of morals and religion. And all the while God is thundering, "Sin is the transgression of the law, and the soul that sinneth it shall die."

THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE

It was my privilege recently to address the preachers of the Dallas District. Bishop Selecman, in introducing me, said: "I am glad Bishop Broomfield is here, for he preaches a gospel we need."

After the service I wondered what kind of a gospel I was preaching. I concluded it was a sort of mariner's-compass gospel. The mariner's compass has 32 points. One who follows the sea can recite these 32 points with ease; he calls it "boxing the compass." Few people on land can "box the compass," but everyone knows its four cardinal points—north, east, south, and west.

What are the four cardinal points in the Gospel? The *first* is the reality, and tragedy, and awfulness of sin; the *second*, the glory of redemption; the *third*, the centrality of Christian experience; and the *fourth*, our dependence on the Holy Spirit.

Build your life around these four points, and let the other points wait until you get to heaven, where you will be able to box the spiritual compass to advantage.

THE INCARNATE WORD IS THE NORM OF AUTHORITY

The authority of the written Word for us is determined by the incarnate Word. The incarnate Word says—"You have heard that it was said of them of old time . . . , but I say unto you. . . ." Thus if you find anything in the Scriptures that is out of harmony with the spirit and teachings of Jesus, you can simply put it aside and listen to him; for he, the incarnate Word, is the ultimate authority for us and determines what is the revelation of the mind of God for us.

Go back to the Bible, and as you undertake to find its meaning, remember you are a disciple, a learner, under the instruction of the third person of the Godhead. Recognize him as you say: "Our Lord told us that when you came, you would lead us into all truth and make plain to us the things he said. Do it now." And, in response, the Spirit will so operate upon your mind and heart as to enable you to discover things new and old in the Word, such as you never could have discovered through your own intellectual ability.

CHAPTER III

THE PRIESTHOOD OF BELIEVERS

by Bishop Ralph S. Cushman

"And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God."—Galatians 2:20 (R.V.).

"I can but testify:
Words may not tell,
This sweet companionship
I know so well.

Ears may be deaf,
Eyes may not see,
This Presence who comes near
And speaks with me.

But sweeter than this world,
And all its grace,
Grows the Invisible
And the Unseen Face!"

I wonder if we know this companionship? If we do not know this, then we do not know one of the basic truths at the very heart of Protestantism.

One major thing in the program of The Methodist Church is a study of the central truths of the New Testament which are the affirmations of Protestantism. These emphases are to be on our faith, church, ministry, and mission. I am thankful for four years of emphasis on the essential truths of the Scripture.

In the first message of this series, Bishop Corson expressed disappointment in the lack of understanding on the part of our Protestant people as to the central teachings of our scripture and our Protestantism. In the second message, Bishop Broom-

field said that our churches are filled with people who do not know the Word of God and who really do not make it their business to know God. There are too many ignorant Protestants who are not acquainted with the central teachings of the Word. Will it not be a great thing if our pastors study to know and to teach our people, young and old, the essentials of our faith?

In order to bring you quickly into the heart of my theme, I want to take you back into the life of Martin Luther, the leader of the Reformation. No sooner was that boy baby born in 1483, than the father began to dream the dream that this boy would be a lawyer, educated as well as any boy could be educated in those days, to become perhaps the counselor of kings! As the boy grew up, he himself caught the dream. In 1505 the young man came out of one of the finest universities in Germany, equipped to stand before the courts.

But a few months afterward, greatly to the disappointment of his parents, this young lawyer determined to be a monk. The father was furious; but it made no difference, for Martin Luther had made up his mind.

Why did Martin Luther turn from the law to enter the monastic cell? This is the important question in the understanding of the man. A thousand years before this, St. Augustine had said, "Our heart is created for thee, O God, and we are not at rest until it rests in thee." It was the heart that was troubling Martin Luther. Intensely religious and with a great dread of impending judgment haunting him from the teachings of his childhood, his soul struggled with the question, "What must I do to be saved?" Frankly, he had not found an answer. The church had given its customary answer: "Obey the church." Martin Luther had done his best, but peace had not come. There was one last resort, the ascetic life of a monk—and he was willing to pay the price.

Luther was not an ascetic; he was a man of life and action—but he was seeking peace. A year later there was a solemn as-

sembly, and as a central figure, a keen young Master of Arts was taking his oath of obedience to the rules of his Order. The consecrated hood was put over his head, and he prostrated himself on the floor in the form of a cross.

Now he was a monk, but he had not found the peace for which he longed. He became desperate. He subjected himself to the severest discipline, denied himself all comfort, tortured his body, and fasted and prayed to a degree almost fatal to his life. He was a model of monkish piety. Later he wrote, "If ever a monk got to heaven by monkery, I would have gotten there."

Still longing for peace, he looked forward with exceeding joy to a pilgrimage to Rome. If we could have stood some hundreds of years ago by the side of the Roman road leading from the north to the world-renowned city, we would have looked upon a common but very interesting sight. Two pilgrims were drawing near when suddenly, at the point where the road turns and the pilgrim gets his first view of the sacred city, one of the travelers threw up his hands, fell to his knees, and cried, "Holy Rome, hail! Thrice holy from the blood of the martyrs."

That was Martin Luther, a footsore pilgrim from beyond the Alps. Like thousands of other pious worshipers, Luther had come in joyous expectation of visiting the many sacred shrines and gaining advantage from the many indulgences offered by the Roman pontiff. Nor did he pass any by. So eager did he become that he even found himself regretting that his parents were not dead that he might get their souls out of purgatory, for which charitable work so many opportunities were offered.

These reflections, however, came during those earlier days of his visit. With the passing of weeks, little by little, his soul was becoming shocked at the things that he saw and heard. He came to Rome with eagerness, but he left in bitter disappointment. "If ever," said Bishop Nuelsen in his *Martin Luther*, "a man left the holy city thrust down from the heights of zeal and en-

thusiasm to the very depths of despair, wounded and crushed in spirit, it was that plain honest German monk."

He was still the devoted servant of his Order, still a full and firm believer in the Roman Catholic church. But doubts had arisen. In his despair he began to turn away from priest and pope and to throw himself on God alone. With a new hope he went to the pages of the Sacred Book.

It is a long story. Even before this, he seems to have caught a glimpse of light from Paul's word, "The just shall live by faith." Now we can imagine a new dawning as he studies those words in *Romans*: "By the works of the law shall no flesh be accounted righteous in his sight." Was this not his own experience? Had he not sought by works of merit, penance, and pilgrimage to no avail? What did the apostle mean when he said, "We therefore conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law"?

At last there came the moment when the searcher discovered what everyone must discover for himself, whether Protestant or Romanist—that peace is the gift of God and that it is the reward of faith. At last Martin Luther made this discovery and out of his new-found faith he wrote, "My God has given me, unworthy condemned man, without any merit, purely, freely, and of simple mercy, through and in Christ, a perfect wealth of all goodness and blessedness, so that I henceforth require nothing more than to believe that it is so."

An understanding of the long soul struggle of Martin Luther is necessary to a comprehension of the development of the Reformation. This is why our Protestant people should rediscover the Reformation.

It was at Wittenberg that the light finally broke. It was upon his discovery of God in Christ that Luther lectured to the university students in his classes. It was the religious experience of the monk more than anything else which brought him into disfavor with Rome and made him the religious reformer of his

age. And now triumphant from the agonies of his long quest after reality, after assurance, after certainty, it is not difficult to account for the revulsion of his whole being, as he saw the church selling absolution from sin for gold and for silver.

It was the selling of indulgences that first brought him into open rebellion with Rome. The Pope had need of money. There was one way which was sure to procure it. Without going into the theory of the sale of indulgences, and without doing any injustice to Rome, we can say that to the popular mind of the day there was a fixed price for the pardon of every sin and of all sins. The business of putting this particular indulgence upon the market was in the hands of the famous bankers, the House of Taggers, in cooperation with John Tetzel, the priest.

See it as Luther saw it: On the Sunday preceding there was the announcement by the parish priest that the pope had offered a new indulgence for sin, and that the papal ambassador would arrive in state on some day during the week. The day had come. The church bells rang for joy. The clergy and magistrates and children met the procession outside of the village. A large red papal cross was at the head. Then came the papal bull of indulgence, exhibited on a velvet cushion, followed by Tetzel and his companions on white horses and clothed in beautiful vestments. Says an old writer, "The people could not have received God with greater honor." The procession marched to the largest church. The papal cross was placed before the altar; the money chest was put next to it, with the certificates of the pope near at hand—and then Tetzel disposed of his goods.

No auctioneer could talk more smoothly. Hear him: "My brethren, God has sent me to you with His last and greatest gift. The church is in need of money. I am empowered by the pope to absolve you from any and every crime you have committed, no matter what it may be. The moment the money tinkles in the box your soul shall be as pure as that of the babe unborn."

The hideousness of it all was increased by the sale of indulgences for *contemplated* sins, together with the release of the dead from the tortures of purgatory. "Do you not hear," cried the priest, "your dead parents crying out, 'Have mercy on us! We are in sore pain and you can set us free by a mere pittance. We have borne you, we have given you our inheritance, and you are so hard hearted and cruel that you leave us to roast in flames when you could so easily release us.' "

Luther was stirred. When persons of ill repute, living in sin, with no intention of reforming, came to him, demanding absolution, showing their certificates, tickets to heaven, paid for and stamped with the papal seal, the man who had come to know that full forgiveness from sin was the free gift of God in Christ to a trusting and repentant soul, could stand it no longer. He must find a vent for his mighty feelings; and he dared to say exactly what he thought.

On October 31, 1517, after the custom of the time to make known his position to the university and the town, this thirty-four-year-old man posted his famous theses, protesting against the wrong, on the portals of the castle church of Wittenberg. Here is one of the propositions: "Those who believe that, through letters of indulgence, they are made sure of their own salvation will be eternally damned, together with their teachers."

No one was more surprised than was Luther at the excitement his theses produced. Not only were the university towns stirred, but in a fortnight the news had flashed all over Germany and in a few weeks it had reached the ends of Christendom. The monk had voiced the chaotic feelings of thousands. People began to divide themselves into two camps, for and against the reforms. Among his colleagues the more timid were afraid, the bolder were in doubt. From many a quarter it was intimated that the audacious monk would soon suffer the fate of Savonarola at the stake. Said an old friar, "You speak the truth, good brother, but you will not accomplish anything. You had better

go to your cell and say 'Lord have mercy on me.' " At last Rome was heard from and Luther was summoned to appear before the pope in sixty days.

It would be impossible for us to understand the continued security of the reformer and the progress of the reforms without some understanding of the political conditions of the times. The Reformation was not a political movement. It was fundamentally religious. But it could hardly have succeeded as it did had not the political situation of the time been favorable to its protection. For generations the pope had held his supremacy by working back and forth between the jealousies of kings and princes. At one period he would hold France in subjection to his claims by the use of the German army. At another period he would cow Germany or Spain by intrigues with France.

Luther escaped trial at Rome and certain death because Frederick of Saxony was his friend and at that particular time the pope could not afford to antagonize this German prince. A half compromise was effected. The months passed. The excitement began to abate. But all the time Rome had not forgotten, and Luther was deep in his studies and his preaching. The storm was brewing. Two years later it broke. This time Rome seems to have taken the aggressive when John Eck, chancellor of the University of Ingolstadt, a loyal defender of the practices of Rome, challenged the scholarship of Wittenberg to debate.

This famous contest, lasting many days, is full of interest and worthy of fuller study. But it is of moment to us because it was out of this debate that the great reformer finally discovered himself. John Eck had already won many a laurel as a debater of great skill. Heretofore Luther had committed the mistake of thinking that his radical views, reached under the influence of his own religious experience, were in harmony with the faith of the church. His shrewd opponent showed him where he stood, and emancipated him forever from the delusion that he, with his views, could remain a loyal subject to the Roman pontiff.

What a picture! Luther, a man of sterling honesty coming forth from a great debate, standing as he has never stood before, face to face with himself and his task. The question was, should he be loyal to the truth, to himself, to his faith and to his God? There could be no choice for him. He had seen the light, and his path was clear. Henceforth there was no question as to his attitude toward Rome. Little by little he had come to see what only a few before him had been bold enough to perceive: that a church might be a church without giving allegiance to the Roman pontiff, and that salvation outside of the Roman fold was, in spite of decrees to the contrary, the privilege of any seeking soul, and that there is such a thing as the priesthood of all believers.

Throughout Germany the lines were now fast being drawn. No one better than Luther knew the peril from the imperial city. And now as never before Luther hastened to the work of saturating his country with the truth. He wrote at this time his "Appeal to the German Nation." That did much to bring his countrymen to his standard, but it also hastened the outburst of Roman fury. At last the long expected papal bull arrived. Luther was excommunicated from the church, formally consigned to the flames of hell, and all others who had assisted him were warned to repent. Such was the power which the pope wielded over the minds of even educated and brave men, that there were many who lost their courage and deserted the reformer in this trying and critical hour. His position was most perilous, but he was not afraid. On December 10, 1520, in the presence of invited professors, the students and the public, Luther solemnly burned the papal bull.

We can hardly appreciate the effect of this action in emancipating the common mind from the fear of excommunication from the church. *Here was deliberate defiance of the greatest power on earth*, before which emperors, and kings and princes, and all the nations in Europe, bowed in reverence and awe.

Gregory VII had once declared, "There is but one name in the world, and that is the pope's. All princes ought to kiss his feet"—and most of them had. Luther dared to rebel.

But Rome was not to be defied. She answered with another bull. This time it condemned all the followers of Luther, and called upon civil rulers to search them out and punish them even to death. Thus did matters stand in the German Empire when a new Emperor, Charles V, came to the throne. At heart he was a Spaniard, a loyal Romanist, and the pope called upon him to crush Luther and the Protestant movement. Very carefully he set about to do it. Germany was by this time three-to-one Protestant, though the princes were more evenly divided. It was the demand of Rome that the reformer be condemned without trial. But so strong was public opinion that the emperor dared not do it. Accordingly, in March, 1521, Luther, under promise of safe escort, was ordered to account for himself before the Imperial Diet at Worms.

The question heard everywhere was "Would Luther go?" His friends advised against it, and he himself recalled the fate of John Huss, who, too, was summoned under the promise of safe conduct, but who was burned at the stake by the order of the emperor. But even before receiving the summons, he had made up his mind, and had said, "If I am called, I shall go. And if I were too sick to go, I should have them carry me." So he answered his friends, "I shall go to Worms even if there were as many devils as tiles on the housetops." To his close friend Spalatin, he wrote, "If his majesty calls me to account so that I am ruined, and looked upon, because of my answer, as an enemy of the empire, still I am ready to come, for I have no intention of fleeing nor of leaving the Word in danger, but I mean to confess it until death, so far as Christ's grace sustains me."

The trip from Wittenberg to Worms was really a triumphal procession. Everyone wanted to see the man who was bold

enough to oppose the pope and the Roman world. On the 16th of April the guard at the city gate blew his horn and the populace rushed from their houses to see Martin Luther and his royal escort. The next day he was to stand before the emperor.

The supreme hour in the life of Martin Luther had come. The ruler of the German empire was presiding over probably the most august assembly in the world. The hall was crowded. The torches were lit when Martin Luther was escorted to his chair. He was shown his writings. He acknowledged that they were his. He was asked to recant. In a clear voice he answered—"If I am convinced, I am willing and ready to revoke any error, and shall be the first one to throw my writings into the fire."

It was clearly an invitation to a discussion. But a disputation was not to be permitted. Rome would not consent. He was told that his errors had long ago been condemned at the Council of Constance. They were the errors of Huss. Then was put to him the question of the emperor, "Will you revoke these errors? We desire a plain answer without horns and without cover."

It was the moment of crisis, and amidst a breathless hush, ending in profound excitement, Luther made his famous answer: "Since his imperial majesty wants a plain answer, I shall give him a plain answer. Unless I am refuted and convicted by testimonies of Scripture and by clear argument, since I believe neither the pope nor the councils alone, it being evident that they have often erred and contradicted one another, I am conquered by the passages of the Holy Scripture which I have quoted, and my conscience is bound to the Word of God: I cannot and I will not recant. . . . Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen."

Thomas Carlyle says, "That was the greatest moment in the history of modern man. The vast work of reconstruction in England, in the Americas, in Europe, in the world, was hanging in the balance." If Luther, in that moment, had done otherwise, all would have been otherwise.

I have reviewed the story of Martin Luther, not for controversial purposes, but because it is imperative for modern Protestants to get a closer view of that age-long, tremendous struggle that produced our present-day religious freedom—the liberty of the individual believer to worship God as a person in his own right—a priesthood proclaimed in the Word of God.

None will appreciate the work of Martin Luther and the long line of reformers who preceded him until they have some vivid understanding of the degeneration of the New Testament faith under the mighty power of the Roman hierarchy of the Middle Ages. The Reformation was not a sudden movement. Its roots ran back more than a thousand years when the early church, first nurtured in the blood of the martyrs, began to degenerate under the patronage and influence of a Roman emperor. No sooner had the first Roman bishop made his claim to superiority over other bishops; no sooner had the church demanded absolute dominion over the human mind; no sooner had she undertaken to enforce her decrees by sword and fire than the spirit of the Lord in the souls of men cried out in protest.

But for years these cries were smothered cries. It is a long dark road which leads from Arnold of Bresca to John Tauler and from John Tauler to the German monk of Wittenberg. Before John Huss in the year 1418 had walked out from prison to die the fiery death in the presence of the eager fathers of the Roman church, he had written upon the walls of the dungeon these significant words: "They may kill the goose, but a hundred years from now a swan will arise which they cannot kill." That time came a generation sooner than he thought. Multitudes were becoming very sensitive to the gross superstitions which overlay the pure gospel of Christ, to the vicious means by which the highest ecclesiastical offices were reached, and to that tyrannous thralldom in which the church held the mind and the conscience of the day. The time was fast getting ripe for a great religious and intellectual revolution. All that was needed to call

this revolution into being was the man—an unusual man—one who should become the incarnation of its spirit. In that great hour God sent Martin Luther.

But it was much more than religious freedom that was at stake in Luther's challenge to the Roman hierarchy. Indeed the very heart of the gospel was in balance. Years before Saint Paul had contended in like fashion for the purity of the faith. The Jerusalem party were not denying the saviourhood of Christ, but they were surely obscuring Christ in the wrappings of old Hebrew traditions. Saint Paul cried out in protest. He said, "If you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you." (Galatians 5:2, R.V.) Then followed the battle for the preservation of the Christian faith. The apostle gave as his reason for his intense earnestness these words: "To them we did not yield submission even for a moment, that the truth of the Gospel might be preserved for you." (Galatians 2:5, R.V.)

Paul's great concern was that the truth of the Gospel might be preserved for us. Paul had discovered Christ as a living reality. No church, no tradition, nothing could substitute for Christ. Indeed, there is no substitute for Christ, not even a church, not even the Scriptures. Christ must be Lord. Christianity is more than a tradition. Indeed, it is more than a creed; it is a companionship with a living Lord.

Of all the prizes
That earth can give,
This is the best:
To find Thee, Lord,
A Living Presence near,
And in Thee rest!

Friends, fortune, fame,
Or what might come to me—
I count all loss,
If I find not
Companionship
With Thee!

CHAPTER IV

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

by Bishop William T. Watkins

"Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord, Jesus Christ."—Romans 8:1 (Moffatt).

Unfortunately religion, whether you are thinking of it as an individual experience, or whether you are thinking of it as something with a long sweep down through human history, is not one of those things that will stay fixed without constant attention. So true is this that, historically, religion has tended to follow a certain pattern, to go on in a certain cycle repeatedly as it moves down through history.

Those great hours of the rebirth of faith, the high hours of history, religiously speaking, are moments when men are seized with a boundless enthusiasm, moments when with an utter dedication of themselves they seek the good life with complete abandon. However, that first great burst of enthusiasm and passion and daring, tends, with the passing of time, to decline.

There comes a second phase of the movement, when men are inclined to dwell speculatively upon the religion which their forefathers had. Perhaps this is the intellectual stage of the cycle when men express doctrinally the religious experience that the former generation had.

Then the cycle, or the next phase of the cycle, tends to be an institutionalizing of the matter, a putting of this daring good life of a former age into the little routines and legalisms that this stage of religion is characterized by. That is the pattern that religion tends to follow. Over and over you find it in the Old Testament. It's the protest of the prophet at that third stage that brings it back to the original.

Over and over again in history religion has gone around that cycle. I need not enumerate those cycles. The weapon which the prophet, or the apostle, or the reformer has used as he has struck at crystallized religion has been the doctrine of faith. This is simply because faith is an organ of spiritual knowledge. That's Wesley's term for it: "an organ of spiritual knowledge," just as the five senses are organs of another sphere of knowledge. Through the five senses of the physical body we seize knowledge of the external world out there, and through faith men seize afresh a knowledge and an awareness of the reality of the infinite God.

"Therefore, being justified by faith," says Paul. Paul went through this struggle we are talking about. He had tried the crystallized and institutionalized religion of his day scrupulously and devoutly, and with a remarkable degree of success he had kept the routines of religion. He, too, had marched round and round religiously in that almost unlimited observance of rules and legalisms, and found such an effort to be a failure. That's really the basis of his cry, "O wretched man that I am, who is going to deliver me?" It was the awareness of the reality of his Father that he found through faith that brought Paul to the triumphant life.

That's been true over and over. It was true with Luther, the father of this Protestantism of ours. He too had tried the routines of religion; he'd kept all of the requirements; he had invented additional ones and subjected himself to them. But it was the discovery that by faith alone could a man stand in the presence of God that made Luther the giant that he was. That's the great secret of this religion of ours.

When Luther says "by faith alone," there is a certain emphasis upon that term "alone" as well as upon "faith." He had been a devotee of a conception of religion that conceived of grace as flowing only through the sacraments, and the sacraments in the hands of an administering church, and that church

in the hands of a priesthood and a hierarchy. In the religion that Luther inherited, only through the church and through the priesthood and that scheme of things could one find salvation. But that scheme of things failed Luther, and when he says "by faith *alone*," he is reaffirming the right of the human soul to stand on its own feet before God. He is affirming that there is no intermediate something between him and the Father's presence, except the redeeming personality of Jesus Christ—no sacraments—no ecclesiasticisms—no priesthood—no any other thing of man's devices.

Luther reaffirmed the independence of the human spirit. That's the meaning of that great thing—the priesthood of all believers—that a man is his own priest before God. Justification by faith is not only spiritually a foundation of our faith, but it has been the great weapon in all generations through which men have rediscovered a living God who is real to the lives of men.

Faith is not a series of intellectual beliefs. Wesley was fond of saying that faith is no more a string of opinions than holiness is a string of beads. Faith is a seizure, the confident seizure, of unseen realities by the outreach of this human spirit of ours.

There is no more subtly deceiving thing than the widespread tendency we have to identify faith with belief—with our set of beliefs. A very profound French theologian in the past generation said, "We are saved by faith, regardless of what we believe." Now that may sound a bit absurd at first hearing, but over and over men have had to change their beliefs in order not to change their faith.

Sometimes we imagine that we are the first generation or first century of men who have had profound intellectual problems in religion and have had to make adjustments to new knowledge and new information. Sometimes we sympathize with ourselves that we are about the most upset generation that history has seen, but this is not so. Four hundred years ago there came the new astronomy. The leaders of that new thing

said the world's round, and moreover this world is not the center of things; the sun is the center of our solar system, and all these other bodies are moving around it. Now that is ordinary information to us, and it is right difficult to realize that at one moment that belief upset men just as much as anything has ever upset us. Men said, "That can't be true; Abraham didn't believe that." But men had to change their beliefs in order not to change that faith. That doesn't disturb you in the least; you've never lost a moment of worry over the fact that the world's round. Our grandchildren may smile just as superiorly upon us when they see the things which have disturbed us time and time again.

Paul had to do something like that. He had a set of beliefs; he believed certain things about the Jewish law and that pathway of legalism to salvation, and he tried it out. Moreover, he got a right good distance at it, but Paul had to change his belief about that in order not to change his faith that there's a way for the human spirit to find its way into the presence of God. Faith is always a daring and venturesome something.

The men who have ushered in the great new eras, the men who have presided at the real step-ups of human history and human civilization have been daring spirits who saw a vision and who seized by faith some things that were not then present realities.

Religion is always far more comfortable when you get it into the routine, when you get it all systematized and everything put in place with no ragged edges or unfinished corners. It's always more comfortable when it's in that stage, but religion never makes any ventures at that stage of the cycle.

You know the difference between a tour and a venture. Cook, or any of these travel agencies, will arrange for you a trip around the world with every detail of it fixed; you know exactly before you leave home just what hotel labels you will have on your suitcase when you get back. Now that's a tour!

All the points on the journey are fixed; at the beginning you are assured that there's no risk in the whole thing. But when Columbus set the prows of those three little ships into the setting sun, not knowing, but determined to find out, what lay beyond that great western horizon—there wasn't any Cook's agency waiting for him on the other side—that's a venture!

The church never ventures; it never dares something; it never takes a risk—except when this reality of faith is surging in its heart. Then the unseen becomes the real and a vision stirs and unlooses energies in men that they didn't know they had. It's only in such hours of faith that the church has really gone out to make a difference in the life of the world. Our faith doesn't change in this sense. We may change some of our beliefs, but not our faith.

The church needs to be reassured over and over: Religion won't stay fixed unless we work at it. Faith won't stay alive in our hearts unless we keep certain contacts. This faith we are talking about through which salvation comes, and through which alone it comes, is an unchanging thing in that sense. The senses through which physical knowledge flows to us don't change, even if the knowledge out there and the external world changes. Faith as the organ of seizure—what Wesley called the organ of knowledge, spiritual knowledge—doesn't change. It was the means through which Paul saw all of the realities which he shook the ancient world, and as we face a changing world, we, as leaders in the church of God, need to be reassured that we have some things that will stay fixed.

This story came from the deep South, and it goes back to the 1830's when the stars fell. Of course that moment was momentous to them because everybody was frightened. It was simply a meteoric shower, but it lit up all the heavens as bright as day, and people were scared frantic; they thought the world was coming to an end. You've heard of that great moment back there in 1833 when the stars fell. In a particular neighborhood

the people were all frantic; some were praying, some were crying, some were driven with great fear. They thought the world was coming to an end, but a certain old South Carolinian knew a little more about it than his neighbors. He recognized it for what it was, a meteoric shower, and after watching it for some time, he went around the corner of the house and, amid the flashing little bodies that were lighting up the earth with temporary flashes of light, peered through it until he found the North Star. It was as steady as the planet that it is, and he called his old servant around, and said, "Uncle Eff, I'm going back to bed. You sit down here and keep your eye on that North Star, and if she ever wobbles you call me."

There are some things that do not wobble. There must be something that doesn't wobble and doesn't change, but holds men to the same moral heroism and sheer daring that has characterized men in all generations in whose lives faith was a living reality.

Justification by faith has been the emphasis in every high moment in religious history. Faith can send us to do great tasks and can sustain us in weary hours as we do the hard work of the Kingdom of God. Faith, and faith alone, can sustain our lives.

So we have a gospel to preach. It's a declaration ; we affirm it ; we acquire it. Men are saved by faith ; men are sustained by faith ; men are carried to the great daring deeds that the Kingdom of God needs, by faith alone.

CHAPTER V

THE RIGHT OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT

by *Charles W. Brashares*

We are glad to belong to a Methodism which has a Board of Evangelism determined to put content into religion. We have been pondering each phase of Christianity and we realize anew how rich is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Jesus was a broadminded man. Some people can never quite appreciate a movement unless they lead it themselves. John the disciple came running to Jesus, and he said, "We saw somebody casting out devils in your name, and we forbade him, because he did not follow us." And Jesus said, "Forbid him not, for if anyone does a miracle in my name, he will not speak lightly of me." And so Jesus encouraged anybody anywhere to do any good that he could.

I

John Wesley was a follower of the Lord Jesus in this respect. We are proud to remember how frequently he said, "If your heart is with my heart, give me your hand." At one time he wrote:

"The distinguishing marks of a Methodist are not his opinions of any sort. His assenting to this or that scheme of religion, his embracing any particular set of notions, his espousing the judgment of one man or another, are all quite wide of the point. Whoever therefore imagines that a Methodist is a man of such and such opinion is grossly ignorant of the whole affair. There is no other religious society under heaven which requires nothing of men for their admission into it, but a desire to save their souls. The Methodists alone do not insist on your holding this

or that opinion, but they think and let think." As a Methodist you may agree with John Wesley, or not agree, because you too have the right of private judgment.

The right of private judgment is pretty close to the heart of the scripture. If you look into the Old Testament you will discover that it tells of every man's right to discover God. My rabbi friend told me, "Note that the scripture does not speak of God as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Rather it speaks of "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob"—almost as if they were three Gods. God seldom reveals himself in exactly the same way to three generations of people. Thus we think of three revelations of God as we say "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob."

A very prominent part of ancient Jewish thinking was that they should beware of any crystallization of their thoughts of God into a static image or creed. The commandment on Sinai had spoken, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image." The difficulty with a graven image is that when it is finished and men worship it, no man dare make a new discovery about God. Progress ceases.

In counter-distinction to nations around them, the Jews were constantly arriving at new understandings of God. There was nothing to keep them from accepting new revelations. But finally, without realizing just what they did, the Jewish people deified the Jewish law. Thus when Jesus, the Pioneer of Life, came with a new revelation of the love of God, the Jews opposed the idea that Jesus or any other man could make a new discovery of God. The Jews had forgotten the right of private discovery of God, and so they killed the man Jesus because he had a new idea and they bowed down to the ancient image of their god of law.

When we come to the New Testament, we are again in the land of freedom, where over and over again we have evidence that each man not only testified to God as he had found him,

but also listened with joy to the differing testimonies of others. Mark, in his gospel, thought of Jesus Christ as a marvelous worker of miracles. That did not keep Matthew from seeing Jesus as the Messiah of the Jews, or Luke from presenting Jesus as the friend of the poor and the outcast: "He shall cast down the mighty from his seat and lift up those of low estate," thought Luke. Moreover, none of these conceptions of Jesus kept John from saying in substance, "Well, however Jesus looks to you, to me he is the Word made flesh, who walked among men full of grace and truth." John saw Jesus as a kind of "eruption of eternity in the field of time." Thus the New Testament tells of men who felt that they not only had freedom but also an inner urgency both to find God for themselves and to hear the differing testimonies of others who have found him.

As for Paul, he was right dogmatic in some respects. He had a firsthand experience of Christ, and all his life he refused to be disobedient unto the heavenly vision. Yet Paul also confessed a deep indebtedness to the Greeks and barbarians and others, because he recognized the validity of their religious experiences too. And if the name "Protestant" comes, as some declare, from the words "pro" (meaning "for") and "testant" (meaning "testify") you and I today who call ourselves "Protestants" must profit from the religious experiences of other Christians as witnessed by their testimonies.

But you and I are not always as broadminded as we should be. In theology, we Methodists usually are tolerant. When we go to an Ecumenical Conference we find almost every variety of theology, and we all feel united in one Methodism. We don't want any pope to speak *ex cathedra* for us. We don't want any heresy trials or inquisitions. We don't want to hunt down a heretic and excommunicate or torture him. We believe that if people are to learn to think, they must have freedom to think, beginning where they are and progressing as rapidly as they can in their understanding of God. Because of this theological free-

dom, we are constantly growing in our knowledge of God. But strangely enough, when we turn to social classes, we Methodists are pretty much an orthodox, middle-class, white-collar group who have very little appreciation of people who belong to classes other than our own.

A certain other church, which goes along the ancient groove theologically, has socially a left wing which reaches out to organize laborers and to identify the church with labor groups. That same church has a right wing which reaches out, not only to show sympathy for the capitalist, but even, unfortunately at times, it seems to back dictators like Franco. But Methodism has no wings. It does not seem to be properly impressed with the importance of men either on the right or on the left, but only by those who have middle-class views. If anyone stands up and says "In my judgment Jesus would be more interested in the laborers than we are"; we think the spokesman is simply a heretic, that's all. And if somebody says, "In my judgment Jesus has a significant place and task for rich men"; we ask, "Where does a person get a notion like that?" Do we not need to regain an evangelistic passion for men of all classes, and a recognition of their worth, even though they have a class outlook different from our own? God is still seeking every man, woman and child, whatever their mental outlook may be.

When you and I walk along the lake, the sun not only makes a shining pathway to our feet but it also lights other portions of the lake that we do not see at all. Even so, God makes his revelation specifically to each different group and class and individual of mankind. It may at first seem a radical thought, but I wonder if the time will come when we in the church shall rise above the secular and social divisions around us and it will be possible for a Methodist minister to have capitalists and communists, poor men and rich men in the fellowship of one church. Then the preacher can say to one official board member: "I understand you are a capitalist. What are you doing to cleanse capitalism

and to make it more subservient to the will of Jesus Christ?" And the same preacher could say to another member: "You are a communist. What are you doing to make communism less materialistic that it might be an instrument of Jesus Christ?"

Of course, someone will ask, "Would you allow a communist to come into a labor union?" Perhaps you would not allow him to come into a labor union, any more than you would allow a spy to come into an army, but the church is neither a labor union nor an army. The church speaks to men on both sides of the battle line, on both sides of the labor dispute. It should sympathetically present Christ everywhere there are men and women and children in need. There may be both pagan and Christian communists as well as both pagan and Christian capitalists. Let the church know that God is making his presence felt among men of every class and kind, and Christians of different background can greatly enrich our Christian fellowship.

Out of his experience and private judgment, let each man testify concerning God as he has found him. And let us listen with reverence to every man's testimony, knowing that truth is larger than any one of us. Then we shall share the broadmindedness of that writer of scripture who called upon all the redeemed of the Lord to say so, saying,

Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, stars of light. . . .
Ye monsters of the sea and all the deeps. . . .
Fruitful trees and all cedars . . . beasts and all cattle. . . .
Kings of the earth and all people. . . . old men and children. . . .

So let every thing and every person declare the glory of God as he finds it and sing the great Creator's praise. Such a symphony of divine praise can only have value for us as we grant to every man the right of private judgment.

II

Now all this leads us to a second statement about a man's right to have convictions of his own. Not only must we have reverence for the private judgment of others, but also we have a perfect right, certainly, to private judgment of our own. Some persons recognize the right of others to think, but do not do much thinking of their own. A student at school, being called on to recite the lesson, said to the professor: "I think it would be better if *you* spoke on that subject. You're an authority on it, and I don't know much about it. What do you think?" The professor replied, "I want you to realize, I am an authority. I do not think. I *know*." The student added, "I don't think I know either."

There are a great many people whose tolerance springs from such a basis as that. They are tolerant of everybody's belief because they haven't any particular beliefs of their own. They are pessimistic about it making any difference anyhow what anybody believes. They label their attitude "tolerance." But that was not the kind of tolerance in which our Lord believed. Immediately after saying that other people had the right of private judgment, Jesus turned to his own disciples and emphasized the necessity of keeping their own lives open to the revelation of God. He said, "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out" (it isn't as important to see with your eyes as it is for your heart to be open to the mandates of God); and "If thy foot offend thee, cut it off" (it is better to limp into heaven than to leap into hell). Of all things, this is basic: that every man out of his experience shall come to certain superlative convictions for which he would gladly live or gladly die. In much of our talking of tolerance, we forget the necessity of having some convictions of our own.

Sometime ago we heard a lieutenant who had been with Eddie Rickenbacker on a raft in the Pacific twenty-one days. You have

heard his story—how they drifted along until they were starving, they prayed, and fish leaped into the boat; then they were thirsty and they prayed, and rain came and refreshed them. Toward the end of the story the lieutenant said: "Now, friends, I was never in a Sunday school or church before I went on that journey, and I know little of theology, nor do I have eloquence enough to tell you how tremendously we suffered throughout those days of hunger and famine. But all we suffered was a very small price for the great thing we got out of that adventure on the sea. We got out of that experience certain convictions about God. So today I can up and say, 'I believe in God.' Whatever it costs a man to come to that belief, let me tell you it is well worth the cost."

The preachers' association got together and discussed whether or not they believed in the kind of religion that lieutenant had talked about, and some of the ministers did and some didn't. But among the statements the preachers made, one said this: "As I read the gospel concerning the first-century Christian fellowship, it dawns on me that first-century Christians had convictions which led them to expect a great deal more of God than we do." That is true. First-century Christians believed so greatly that a little handful of them could move out into a pagan community and create a Christian church. They were men of tremendous and compelling conviction because they believed that everyone individually could come to 'know God, could understand God's will for his life, and could enter into certain experiences from which could come a bold and unimpeachable testimony.

Some time ago I visited a school of religious education where the teacher was talking about the Bible. Using the question-and-answer method, she asked the children, "Who wrote the Bible?" After a moment's quiet, a youngster (possibly thinking of the twenty-third psalm) said, "Shepherds wrote the Bible." "Yes," replied the teacher, "some shepherds wrote part of the

Bible. Now why do you think shepherds wrote the Bible?" One child answered, "Because shepherds had lots of time while they were watching the sheep: out under the stars they had opportunity to come to know God pretty well." And then the teacher said, "But there's a *New Testament*. Was that written by shepherds?" and they decided the *New Testament* was not written by shepherds. Then the teacher asked why they needed a *New Testament* when God had revealed himself in the *Old Testament*. That was quite a difficult question for the children, and they sat there some time before one of them said, "I suppose they learned something new about God." I shall never forget what happened next. A little boy with a light in his eyes leaped to his feet and said, "Maybe they haven't learned all about God yet. I'm going to learn something about God that nobody before me ever knew about him." I think that boy had come to claim some of the right of every person to know God in such an intimate, realistic way, that, while he received with reverence the testimony of every other person, he himself had certain convictions that were deep and abiding and that seemed to him to be even more real than all the judgments of the rest of the world.

Consider this matter of private judgment. Is it not the very basis of a sense of responsibility? Perhaps you have been worrying about a lack of a sense of responsibility over whole areas of the world. Someone says with a smile, "Well, fifty or sixty million Frenchmen can't be wrong." We hide our sense of responsibility in the crowd. Some little man who is president or king forgets that he is a little man with headaches and heartaches, and thinks he is God. He gives a command and the world, which has also forgotten God's will, marches off to war. But God, who gives to each man who will receive it a special revelation of his love and will, will also hold each man responsible for obeying his command.

III

With the right of private judgment comes also the responsibility of private obedience to God's will. When God speaks, we should obey. There shall come a time when we shall stand before God's judgment and he will say to us concerning our children, "Did you obey me concerning your children?" and we will answer, "Lord, they weren't doing that for children in our day." And God will say to us, "I didn't ask what others were doing. Did you do what I asked you to do?" And we will answer, "Well, you know in those days the schools weren't so good, Lord." And the Lord will say, "I didn't ask about the schools." "Well, Lord, our minister just wasn't a very happy choice when our children were growing up." "I didn't ask about your minister, I asked about you." "Well, Lord, my family wouldn't have stood by me." "I didn't ask about your family. I will ask about them later; I will ask them about them also. But because you have a peculiar relationship to me, my word comes to *you*. The question is, 'Have you *done* what I asked *you* to do?'"

We are talking a great deal these days about church union, and I believe in it. But almost as large a question as the union of churches is this: What kind of a church will we be when we have united? We hear about a monarchial episcopacy, where some bishop on a throne tells everybody what to do and great masses of people move together under his command. Many people fear communism as a vast conscienceless machine which moves at the command of a dictator and they would oppose it by creating a Protestant Christianity in which people are welded into a mighty striking force to move at the word of some religious or economic dictator. These Protestants do not believe you can reach the conscience of a communist or accomplish anything by following the Christian admonition to overcome evil with good. At the very moment they are unwilling to concede that a communist has a conscience, they are willing to submerge their

own consciences to some human schemer. If Protestantism forgets the right of each man to think for himself and to find God's will for himself through prayer, Protestantism itself may become merely a secular machine. But Protestantism should rather be a fellowship of persons, each of whom has personal relations with God, and all of whom have freely chosen to work together as God directs them. Under that divine direction they may think as differently as the law and the gospel. But they shall all move together by one divine command and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them.

O, what a magnificent thing it is, this freedom in which Christ makes us free! You go into a church some Saturday afternoon and the preacher is in his study studying. That's what God wants him to do. Yonder the organist is playing, practicing for tomorrow. That is what God wants him to do . . . something totally different from the preacher's task. Likewise the choir is getting ready to sing. God has this different task for them. The ushers are preparing. The janitor is getting the church ready and yonder, in the homes, the people are preparing for church, infinitely diversified in their tasks, not moving by any human command, but each in obedience to an inner voice, each preparing to bring his best in worship on the morrow. Then, when Sunday is past, these churchmen go out to their tasks again: the banker to make loans that are redemptive in the financial world; the teacher to teach as a different kind of teacher than a pagan teacher, because God has given him a special gift; and every other Christian to face his individual responsibility. Each one has a unique responsibility as a result of his right to private judgment.

Sometime ago a certain young preacher was appointed pastor of a church. It was a very wonderful church in some respects, but the official board had decided that they would not do anything to meet the tragic needs of the world overseas. They were putting up some buildings of their own, and they did not want

the needs of the world to interfere with their program. One day the young minister said, "I think we ought to talk sometime about the needs of the rest of the world," and there was a good deal of objection. A church official explained to him they had a rule that anybody who wished to send money out of the country could not send it through the church. Donors could send money individually, but the church treasurer would have nothing to do with it. "Well," the young minister said, "I feel that it is quite necessary to raise this issue in the meeting of our official board," and the official said, "We beg of you, don't do that. We are getting along so very happily at the moment. Can't we just go on in the splendid harmonious way we are going now?"

Nevertheless, the official board members were called to a meeting. The minister said, "I love you men. You are great men. I wouldn't displease one of you for anything in the world, except when God speaks. I have a feeling that God outweighs all of you put together. You will pardon me for that, but God is very real to me, and I feel that God has said to me, 'You present to that church the needs of the world,' and some day . . . this very day, God will ask me, 'Did you do what I asked you to do?' and I am going to answer, 'Yes, Lord, I did.' So now I shall present the needs of the world as best I can, and suggest a certain motion which I believe you should vote through. Then further action is your responsibility. After I have presented the needs of the world, my responsibility for the decision ends. Then you can vote this proposal up or you can vote it down; that is your responsibility. And sometime when God says to each one of you, 'When my preacher presented to you my world's need, what did you do about it?' each one of you will answer for the way he voted."

So the preacher presented the world's need. After he had finished, the man who had pled with him not to present it was the first one to speak. He said, "It never occurred to me before, but we have tried to lose our individual sense of responsibility

in our group. Our preacher has been away to theological school, and I suppose he knows God better than I do, and if he is going to do what God asked him to do, I'm going to do what God asked me to do, and I'm going to vote for this measure to help the world. I had not realized before that this is my responsibility." Others also spoke in like manner. And after the overseas budget and plan had been adopted by their vote, the official board members congratulated themselves and one another with a new sense of self-respect. Each had a new understanding of his own responsibility and a new sense of the significance of his relationship to God.

The right of private judgment is a splendid heritage for every Christian. It makes for progress in the Christian group as each man receives the treasured wisdom won by his fellows in their experiences with God. And private judgment also keeps fresh in every man a sense of keen responsibility as he realizes that "Every man shall give an account of himself unto God." (Romans 14:12.)

CHAPTER VI

SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

by Bishop W. Angie Smith

"Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Ceasar's, and unto God the things which be God's!"—Luke 20:19.

There is an increasing discussion in America regarding the importance of the separation of church and state. In some quarters it is very intense and has been lowered into the level of petty personality rather than holding the lofty ideal which has been the very pinnacle of the development of religious life in this western continent of ours. It is a controversy of long standing and is of growing importance, for some of us believe that the very heart of the glorious opportunity of the church today is being injured.

When one considers the church and the state in their relationship, it cannot be limited to any one form of government. There have in reality been four separate positions in the matter. We attempt carefully to define them:

(1) There is the position of the Roman Catholic church which has always held that the church is above the state, superior, and at times the acknowledged leader of all that which is secular.

(2) There is the position of the church in Germany of a few years ago, when the church was beneath the state, and to a very large degree found it necessary to receive orders from the state.

(3) There is the position of the established church of Great Britain walking to a very large degree side by side with the state, under the authority as an established church.

(4) Then there is the position in our own American nation—revolutionary, but to some of us most Christian of all—a free church in a free state for the purpose of free people making their own personal decision regarding their relationship to God.

Reports come from certain nations regarding the attendance in state churches, saying that not more than six per cent of the membership of the state church attend upon the worship of God on any occasion. By indifference and neglect members show almost an opposition to that for which the church stands. Every child born into that nation becomes automatically a member of the church, but reared through the years of childhood into manhood and womanhood, they become completely indifferent not only to the opportunity found in the church but to the responsibilities that rest upon them as members of the church.

The history of our great church movements in America are interesting though quite often unduly confused. Of the original 13 colonies of our American nation we do not find religious liberty in all of them, but in some we find persecution, discrimination, and opposition. When these had won their independence in spirit and in purpose, with a thought of the creation of a new nation the fathers gathered determined to see that no one particular church would dominate the new nation but that every man created in the image of God would have the right to select his own church and worship God according to the dictates of his own heart. It is interesting to note that out of the original 13 colonies there were eight that had established churches (three were Congregationalist and five were Episcopalian), and yet the early fathers in their desire to create a free people and build a foundation of a new democracy were determined that there would be no established church.

That did not mean a separation of state and religion, so often confused in our modern discussion. Theirs was a desire to see that no church became supreme, save only in the loyalty of its own particular members in the maintenance of its standards and the propagation of its faith. Unfortunately, across the years such a thought has been created in the minds of such a large share of our people until we have thought in terms not of separation of

church and state, but in terms of the separation of religion and the state. Between these, there is a vast difference.

It would be very difficult today for one to speak about the various decisions of our Supreme Court and bring the decisions into harmony with each other. They seem to be so contradictory. One decision says that it is permissible for the money of a state and the nation to be used in the transportation of students to parochial schools, and another decision of the same court says that it is unlawful for any school to permit any of the children to be dismissed for a period of time for instruction in their own churches and out of their school buildings in the great moral and spiritual ideals and principles of their own faith. Clarification will be needed. In the development of a secularized idea of the state, in public schools it is possible for life to be made materialistic and for discussions and lectures to be given that are contrary to everything for which the church stands; yet it is impossible under the law for our own children to be instructed in the simple moral creeds of the faith which has been responsible for the inspiration of the building of this nation into truth and greatness.

America is great today not because of physical might nor of natural resources; America is great today because of the results of great spiritual mystics. Children are not born with a knowledge of that which is right and that which is wrong. Children of a family, when denied the opportunity of the teaching of those with larger experience and deeper knowledge, are deprived of the very foundation upon which our glorious history was built in the past and upon which the future of America must be erected.

There are certain principles to be discussed, but certainly the historic position of Methodism in America is not one desiring rights or freedoms or privileges that are denied to any other group, whether it be a group that stands on the corner beating a drum and playing a tambourine or one which worships in a

system of beauty and service of ritual in the most stately cathedral that can be built.

Ever since the first amendment was adopted to our constitution, the state has had a responsibility to see that no church, regardless of its strength, has any advantage from the state financially or otherwise that would be denied to the weakest or to any of the churches or to any of the sects which are so numerous at present in America. The state has the responsibility of seeing that any church of any creed has a perfect right in America to its own school, provided it is able to establish, support, and maintain that school with voluntary contributions from those who are interested. The church with the mightiest and most powerful political influence should not be allowed to derive benefit from tax money that would be denied those with less political strength and influence at the seat of the government, whether it be at the national capitol in Washington or at the state capitol of any of our great states.

The separation of church and state, as developed here in America, has made remarkable contributions to the ever-increasing stream of Christian influence around the world. The separation of church and state, so that the individual church is free, has developed a loyalty on the part of those who become members of the church that cannot exist where one is brought into the membership of the church by birth or by citizenship. In America every man has a right to join the church of his own choice when he has made a personal decision. The Church in America has developed such loyalty and such support and such contribution from its members that it has grown into its present greatness without the contribution of the state and without the protection of any other organized group.

Furthermore, the free church in a free nation has caused such loyalty to be developed and such willingness to serve in the ranks of the church that there has developed among the free churches a great movement among the laity. No state church,

no church that feels that it is dominant and all-powerful, has ever been able to develop such loyalty that men of the laity have been banded together in great lay movements across the years. On the other hand, out of the separation of church and state and out of the resulting freedom of choice for the laity, there has grown a personal loyalty and desire and willingness to serve that have produced great laymen. The free church has so inspired its own members that there has been developed a spirit of generosity never equaled before in the history of the Christian church. State churches receive their support from taxation oftentimes grumbly given, but in the separation of the church and state, the movements of free churches like our Methodism and others in America have been characterized by a spirit of liberality that has never been equaled in the history of the world.

Consequently great institutions have been built—*institutions of learning, institutions of mercy, orphanages and homes*—and likewise beautiful churches erected, little tabernacles built, and churches even without floors by some of the people less privileged in life. Out of the contributions of love, and sometimes out of the contribution of poverty, a great and growing stream of benevolence has flowed across this land, until today there is a church building or an institution on almost every hillside and almost on every street of every city. Why? Because, out of their freedom of choice and their personal commitment to Almighty God expressed through the church of their choice, the people have consecrated not only their lives and their time but likewise their material resources.

The contribution that has been made by the free church across the years is so great that there has come out of the freedom of the church a spirit of democracy that is commensurate with the democracy that is exemplified in the life of the state politically. Consider the authority of those who are selected in our church for certain responsible positions. There is no more democratic process to be found than is demonstrated in our own Methodism

when the laity and the local church, through the Conferences—the Quarterly Conference, the District Conference, the Annual Conference, and the General Conference—gives to those in places of leadership their orders and powers. Every local church is a bed of democracy in which the least and the last of all the laymen have an opportunity to express his own faith and his own personal desire. In the separation of the church and the state, democracy has been able to drive anew a stake of authority so that not only in political conventions but also in church relationships democracy is at work in reality.

Moreover, the great spirit of evangelism, that has been so manifest not only in America or in one particular church but around the world, is the child of the freedom of the church. There are some few state churches that are interested in evangelism, but if you will trace the influence of the evangelistic spirit in any state church, you will find that that state church has been neighbor to a free church and is debtor to it for its spirit of evangelism. Whenever there has been a great outburst of evangelistic zeal, it has been necessary for some individual to walk out of the confines of a state church in order to give expression to the call of God or the soul of individual man—Martin Luther, John Wesley, George Whitefield, and Francis Asbury, without exception.

The free church is so established that it believes that every individual is a priest in the sense that he is responsible for his personal relationship to Almighty God, and that it is not necessary for any other man to stand between his soul and his God. With such a faith as the very foundation stone of our church, one is stirred to the very depths as he goes out seeking to save and to serve those who are the least and the last and the lost, and to bring them into a personal relationship with God. Wherever there is the state church dominated by and controlled by political life, you will find a dampening influence, and a belittling of the personal relationship of the soul to God.

There needs to be a redefining and a new appreciation of the value of the separation of church and state, because this separation is based on the personal relationship of every individual to his own God.

In this day when the state is becoming, in a sense, a second religion in the eyes and thoughts of many, the free church has been guilty of negligence, for in this very freedom to worship God according to the dictates of our own conscience, we must at the same time maintain that every man is free *not* to worship God, if he so desires; it's personal. There has developed in America a secularism so dominant, so controlling, that there are those who confuse it even with a new religion. Men today worship power, strength, military might, material wealth (and these are necessary and valuable in their place—don't misunderstand me) but no one of them or all of them combined will be able to supplant the necessity of the personal relationship of the individual soul to his Maker.

Every age of Christianity has witnessed a struggle between that which is institutional and that which is spiritual, and you and I have responsibility to see that our church does not just maintain an institution, that we do not lose the spiritual power that flows from the throne of God.

The world will be brought to the foot of the cross through the contribution of the freedom of the church. May we in America make certain that there shall always be a separation of church and state, and that the church shall so exemplify the life of our Christ that our spiritual life shall completely baptize the state with spiritual influences, and that both the state and church shall work together for a greater democratic process and a greater future, not alone for America but also for all the nations of the world.

CHAPTER VII

THE CHURCH AND THE SACRAMENTS

by Bishop Willis J. King

I think the Board of Evangelism has come to the kingdom for such a time as this. It is exceedingly important that we understand something of what they are trying to do. They conducted a remarkable campaign during the past quadrennium in bringing into the church one million new members. It is not enough to bring people in. They must be nurtured; they must be taught; they must be made to understand what membership in the Christian church means—and I take it the thing they are doing here is in line with that type of program.

It is exceedingly fitting that this Board which has led in such a remarkable ingathering of new members during the quadrennium should follow it up with addresses under the general theme, *The Evangelistic Message of Protestantism*. It is the type of thing that must be done by a great church if its laymen are to become intelligent Christians as far as their basic beliefs are concerned.

There is some concern, even alarm, in some quarters about the purported going over of a number of prominent Protestants to Catholicism, and our Catholic friends are very alert at giving publicity when such happens. We are told on good authority that many more Catholics become Protestants than Protestants become Catholics. Nevertheless, most of the transfer of Protestant allegiance is probably due to the more respectful use of the Sacraments by our Catholic brothers in worship. Even with the trend toward a more elaborate use of ritual in our own churches, there is little effort to give the worshiper an intelligent appreciation of what is involved in these beautiful symbols of Christian worship. Certainly little or no effort is made to

show the difference in point of view between the Protestant and Catholic interpretation of these Sacraments.

This question has to do not only with Sacraments, but also church architecture. The pulpit-centered church represents the Protestant emphasis on the preaching of the Word; the altar-centered church places the emphasis on the Sacrament.

In recent years the conviction has been growing among Protestants that there is no need to surrender the altar and the emphasis on the altar to our Roman Catholic brethren, and so the trend has been back toward building our churches with the altar in the center and the pulpit on the right and the lectern on the left. It is important, however, that we still recognize the essential difference between the Protestant and Catholic emphasis in our use of the Sacraments and the Word.

By the Sacraments we will refer only to Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The Catholics list seven Sacraments while the Protestants accept only two. Among those listed by the Catholics, but rejected by the Protestants, are confirmation, penance, holy orders, matrimony, and extreme unction. It is not that Protestants do not value these, or some of these, as having religious value, but they are not given the status of Sacraments by the Holy Scriptures.

When Martin Luther, the great Protestant leader, turned away from the church and the papacy as the chief authority for his work, he had to find another authority, and he turned to the Holy Scriptures. He could not find in the Holy Scriptures any definite sanction for these five rites, and so he eliminated them from the list of Sacraments.

We do have definite scriptural sanction for these two, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. This accounts, doubtless, for their practically universal observance.

Take, for example, Baptism. Matthew, Mark, and Luke, all give the narrative of the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist,

and this is corroborated by implication at least in the Fourth Gospel. Both Matthew and Mark have in substance that well-known commandment, "Go, ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

The stories of the beginnings of the early church are set forth in the Acts of the Apostles. We find frequent reference to Baptism as a requirement for membership in the Christian fellowship. For example, at the conclusion of his great sermon on the day of Pentecost, Peter challenged his hearers as follows: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the Holy Spirit." The response was immediate and overwhelming: "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." The same thing happened in the case of the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch under the preaching of Philip. Being convinced that he ought to come into the fellowship, he said, "Here is water. What preventest me from being baptized?" Baptism was the usual rite in admitting people into the Christian fellowship.

There is equally valid scriptural sanction for the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Both Matthew and Mark report the institution of the Lord's Supper at the close of the Passover meal: "As they were eating, Jesus took bread and brake it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it, for this is my blood of the new testament (covenant) which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

In I Corinthians 11:23-25, Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles, writes of the institution of the Lord's Supper as follows: "For I have received of the Lord that which I also have delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given

thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament (covenant) in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." This is substantially the same form which we now use in our ritual of the administration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

DIVERSIONS IN MEANING AND USE

There is a practically universal use of these two Sacraments by all Christian churches, but it is important to note that there are wide diversions among the churches as to what is meant by these Sacraments, and as to the mode by which they are to be administered.

To the Catholic point of view, both Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic, the Lord's Supper becomes a sacrifice and the elements of bread and wine are actually changed into the body and blood of Jesus our Lord, so that Christ is actually with the communicants in bodily presence. Only a special body of priests chosen in a succession known as the apostolic succession can have the authority to administer this or any Sacrament.

The Protestants, on the other hand, regard the Sacraments as a memorial feast, reminding us periodically of our Lord's life on earth, his death, and resurrection from the grave, and his abiding presence with us through the Holy Spirit.

There is a difference among Protestants particularly as to the mode of baptism. I remember as a boy, in the little community where I grew up, there was a fine relationship among the Protestant denominations—i.e., until summer time came, and revival time, and baptizing time. Then we fell out on the amount of water we should use and how we would use it—not for cleansing purposes, or drinking purposes, but for ceremonial purposes, for Baptism. It stirred up such a row in the com-

munity that we never got back together until about summer time the next year, and then it started all over again.

Fortunately, there is greatly increased tolerance among Christian believers at this point. We do not say much about it now. Methodists have allowed wide latitude here, accepting the three modes of baptism that have had general usage throughout the Christian church: namely, sprinkling, pouring, immersion. The mode most commonly used by us is sprinkling.

Methodists include infants among those eligible for baptism. This practice doubtless was taken over at first as a part of our inheritance from the Church of England but has justification, we believe, in the recognition of children given by our Master in his well-known words, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God."

In accepting infants for baptism, we do not pretend to say that they made the surrender of themselves to Jesus Christ or even understand what is involved in the Sacraments. Rather it is a formal dedication of them to God. Parents and sponsors are urged to teach them the meaning and purpose of this Holy Sacrament in order that they may be led into the love of God and the service of Jesus Christ.

CHURCH UNION

There is much talk these days of church union, and many Christians and certainly most Methodists will agree with the eloquent statement on the imperative need for the reunion of the churches as set forth in the Episcopal Address at the 1948 General Conference: "We agree that the churches must become one church, that our Lord is calling upon us to unite." We agree also in the statement asserting our fundamental unity: "Christians worship the same God. We adore and worship the same Christ, our Saviour. We respond to the same Holy Spirit.

We believe in the life everlasting. We repeat similar creeds."

Yet, despite all our commonness of scriptural background and our historical traditions, the Sacraments have been among the most divisive forces.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is a divisive factor in church union. Anyone who has attended a great international conference remembers something of the agony experienced by many Christians when it develops that they cannot commune with each other at the Lord's Table, or if so, only under the priest of a particular branch of the church. What a sad spectacle it is when the very thing given us by our Lord as a sign of our oneness with him becomes the stumbling block of genuine Christian unity!

On the other hand, there have been instances where the Holy Communion has been used with great effectiveness to indicate the unity of the Christian belief. A few years ago a regional interdenominational conference was held in Leopoldville in the Belgian Congo, Africa, composed of missionaries and native Christians representing more than forty different foreign boards and denominations and three continents. How wonderfully they used the Lord's Supper as a sign of their fraternity as children of God and as a means of tremendous lift to their spiritual outlook! Those who participated in that service can never forget it. The ritual itself was taken from no one branch of the church. We were not Anglican or Methodists or Baptists, or state churches of Europe or any one church. The ritual was rather a composite of several. The leaders in the service were representatives from the various national and racial and denominational groups. I think a Protestant pastor was in charge. Americans, white and Negro, had parts in the service. An African native pastor read the scripture. Both the French and English languages were used in the service, and as we read and listened to those beautiful sentences, we could hear again across the centuries those beautiful words of our Master, "Neither pray

I for these alone, but for them also which believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." We seemed to have a glimpse of the possibility of church union with the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper making a real contribution to that possibility.

DEVELOP SPIRITUAL LIFE

The church must learn how to use these Holy Sacraments effectively for the development of the Christian life.

In the first place, the Sacraments must not be thought of as ends in themselves but as symbols of something deeper and more fundamental. The weakness in the use of an external symbol for a spiritual truth is that we may put the emphasis on the symbol and lose sight completely of the fundamental truth it was meant to represent. That is what happened in the case of the old Hebrew law. It was a symbol of their great religious heritage from the time of Moses to the coming of Jesus of Nazareth. The great and fundamental truths of our religious experience of nearly two thousand years became entombed in a dead law book so that Jesus could call their religious leaders "whited sepulchres," full of dead man's bones, men who washed the outside of the cup, but left the inside dirty.

Have you ever thought of this in connection with the story of the Good Samaritan? Most of the time we simply emphasize the benevolence and fine attitude of the Samaritan who picked up this half-dead Jew. Have you ever thought about the other side, the priest and the Levite? The tragedy was not that two human beings went past another human being who was in need of physical relief, but that those men walked by that man in the name of religion. It was a part of their religion. The law says that if a priest or an assistant to the priest became defiled by contact with a dead body he would be ceremonially unclean and

would not be able to administer in the temple for a period. The tragedy is that this thing was done in the name of religion.

Of course, the symbols of the Lord's Supper can be allowed to become meaningless and dead, with no life to them at all. May God forbid. On the other hand, they must always be used to lift us up to an experience with Christ himself, not in any such magical way as our Catholic friends want to believe but in their symbolic reminder of Christ and his meaning to us and to one another.

MAKE THE SACRAMENTS MEANINGFUL

Consider Baptism in this respect. Among the early Christians Baptism was preceded by penitence for sin, a condition of acceptance by Christ, an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Some of these evidences have to do with a vital religious experience and ought to accompany Baptism today, because it is a formal initiation into the Christian life.

The word "sin" has almost dropped out of our religious vocabulary. The early Christians and the Hebrew prophets called men to repent of their sins. Jesus said to Nicodemus and thus to similar seekers after the life eternal, "Ye must be born again." That note of sin, and repentance, and forgiveness for sin, must come back in our preaching. We must cry out with the psalmist, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me." It is only in this attitude of genuine penitence that Baptism can have any real meaning, particularly in the case of adults.

There is need of the same general approach to the use of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. One of the difficulties of keeping this rite fresh and spiritually vital is the frequency with

which it is used, and the necessity for using the same phraseology and the same type of mechanics to carry it through. The service itself can become a perfunctory one and be performed in a perfunctory spirit. Both the celebrant and the communicant should approach the service with a conviction that in this spirit the worshipers meet God and are met by him. There "God comes down the soul to greet, and glory crowns the mercy seat."

The minister should give much thought and prayer to what he hopes the service will achieve in the hearts and lives of the communicants. While there is nothing magical about the elements themselves, there is a possibility of a lift and a larger inspiration for service for our Master, if the Sacrament is handled in the right spirit. Consider the following used in the ritual service as given in the first letter to the Corinthians: "Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me."

"This do in remembrance of me." Paul would put emphasis on the remembrance of Jesus Christ. Paul's prayer was "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God."

Paul's chief concern was that he and all those who looked to him for guidance should put Christ first, not an external symbol. What things were gain to Paul he counted loss for Christ. He was not desirous of being justified by their law book but by the righteousness which comes from faith in Christ.

To the degree in which the Sacraments lead to a deepening of our faith in God as he is revealed in Jesus Christ, to that extent do they have genuine value for our day and generation. Let us use them to the glory of God.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SANCTITY OF THE COMMON LIFE

by Bishop Chas. C. Selecman

"Ye are the temple of God."—I Cor. 3:16.

When the Protestant movement first began to take form and to develop momentum, it sought to free itself from the domination of the priesthood and the tyranny of cold religious forms and ceremonies. One of the most wholesome results was the discovery of the religious value of the ordinary events in everyday life. Upon the understanding of the common man there began to dawn the radiant fact that all life is sacred. "The earth is the Lord's"—every bit of it. It is not necessary to have a man-made altar and a man-made crucifix in order to have a wayside shrine. "Every bush is ablaze with God." Every mountain is tremendous in his presence. Every star leads to Bethlehem. Every breeze is vibrant with a hallelujah chorus.

After the earthquake and the storm and the fire, one needs but to be passive and listen to catch the whisper of the still, small voice. At the golden threshold of every morning an angel stands to proclaim, "Behold, the Lord is in this place—it is holy ground."

In the ancient account of Jacob's dream of the ladder set upon the earth with its top reaching to heaven and with the angels of God ascending and descending on it, there is this startling admission by Jacob: "Surely the Lord was in this place, and I knew it not." In *this* place—just a remote hiding place, just a dusty bed upon the earth; just a hard pillow stuffed with angelic dreams—yet the Lord was in that very place, out there in the wilderness. The tragic confession is also for you and me: "*I knew it not.*"

One recalls the walk to Emmaus. Jesus was with them, but they knew it not.

Has not the radio a lesson for us? We sit in silence in our homes till some suggestion causes us to "tune in" on a certain program. And, behold, the air is filled with the majestic strains of a great symphony, or the angelic voices of an oratorio, or the lofty burning sentences of a statesman or a prophet of God. All the while the music was there, but it required the delicate instrument of the radio to catch the drifting melody or the noble sentences.

"Blessed are your eyes for they see," said Jesus; "and your ears for they hear." Let us open our eyes to behold the glory of God! Let us open our ears. Voices are shouting from the top-most sky, "Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

Following the example of the great Old Testament prophets Jesus sought to free religion from the dead cold hand of formalism. Had he not been taught from youth these great sayings of Micah? In lofty scorn, in burning protest the prophet inquires, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

Then rising to the high-water mark of Old Testament moral and spiritual truth, he declares: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

From his youth Jesus had his mind saturated with such great teachings from Micah, Isaiah, Amos, and the other prophets. Is it any wonder, therefore, that he regarded the growing formalism and injustice of the Jewish leaders of his day with indignation and protest? He branded them as whitened sepulchers, full of dead men's bones, as blind leaders of the blind, as choking

at a gnat and swallowing a camel, as Pharisees who stood in public places making long prayers. Not often did Jesus use harsh language. In every instance where he strongly rebuked men, it was not the thief on the cross, nor the dissolute woman at the well, nor the poor soul taken in adultery, but those who made of religion an outward formal thing to the neglect of justice and mercy. Those who made broad their phylacteries, enlarged the borders of their garments, loved uppermost places at feasts and chief seats in synagogues, were the ones who were roundly denounced by Jesus because, "They say, and do not." The long list of scathing epithets and woes found in Matthew 23 are all pointed at unworthy religious leaders and practices. Seven times in this one chapter Jesus uses the ugly word, "hypocrites." He accuses them of devouring widows' houses. He calls them fools and blind, whited sepulchers, serpents, and a generation of vipers. He charges them with killing the prophets in one generation and building tombs for them the next.

Jesus was a majestic, intrepid *protestant* in the noblest sense. In his whole life and character he manifested and magnified the beauty and reality and sanctity of the common life. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory) . . . the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

Jesus came to reveal the Father as a Christlike God. He came to demonstrate religion as a practical formula of life. He came to show that it will work in a world like our world, full of selfishness and cruelty and sin.

Christianity is not a remote, unreal, mysterious thing. The Word has become flesh. He is dwelling with us. Even today he is showing us his hands and his feet. They are wounded hands. There are nail marks on his feet. But, as they became his supreme and sufficient credentials for the doubting group of disciples huddled together in fear in that little prayer meeting in Jerusalem, so they still speak with mute but irresistible

appeal to the heart of humanity. Compassion and service, the good Samaritan, the cup of cold water, the prodigal's welcome back home, the command to feed the hungry multitude—all these and infinitely more are written in the Master's wounded hands and feet.

“And so the Word took flesh and wrought,
In living terms, the creed of creeds,
In loveliness and lowly deeds,
More strong than all poetic thought.”

The messages in this series are not designed to be controversial. However, they are not required to sidestep vital principles. Perhaps in recent years Protestants have been a bit too soft and yielding in deference to fraternal relationships with various other groups. At times the fear has gripped me that we too readily have surrendered or soft-pedaled those great vital doctrines for which the reformers stood and for which some of them faced martyrdom. This grasping, feverish age will not pause to listen to those who speak in doubtful and apologetic terms. Alongside a great, tender, compassionate word of pardon, “Neither do I condemn thee,” there needs to be sounded the binding imperative, “Go and sin no more.”

In this we are coming close to the heart of Christianity. Pardon and obedience reach both backward and forward. It is a new life that counts—a new purpose, a new outlook, a new sense of fellowship with God and man, a new feeling of responsibility for personal cleanliness and social welfare. “Ye are the salt of the earth. Ye are the light of the world.” Salt rebukes decay. Light encourages life. A Christian stands in the midst of society as a restraining and an inspiring factor. On the one hand he restrains evil; on the other he encourages that which is good.

“Everything liveth whither the river cometh.” A great New York preacher of the last generation called that “Divine Ir-

rigation." One can see the ribbon of green winding its way across the desert. One can picture those refreshing plots of garden and orchard, of vineyard and field fed by the waters that flowed down from Lebanon. Yes, and one can trace across the centuries the historic stream of the Christian church that has fertilized barren lands, produced great civilizations and flowered in beautiful philanthropies.

This is true also of personal lives. In my early ministry, in a midwestern city, one Sunday morning Howard Taylor, son of the famous Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission, stood in my pulpit. In simple but burning words he related the story of his father's life. He told how he literally prayed his way through college and out to China. He prayed for money and missionaries to come. And they came. As he told that story, there sat in the audience a rare young woman whose heart was strangely touched. She was in her thirties, had less than a high school education, and was the sole support of an aged mother. She had a class of teen-age boys in the Sunday school who were strongly devoted to her. Her influence in the little church was very remarkable. For her young pastor, she was a constant inspiration. During the sermon I could see her face, radiant but tearful. Usually she was one of the first to come forward with a word of appreciation. But today she did not come. When I looked, I could not see her. As Dr. Taylor and I were making our way toward the door, I observed her still in her pew. Her head was bowed, her face between her hands. She was weeping pitifully. She came up to us, saying, "Oh, Dr. Taylor, all my life I have longed to be a missionary. But now it is too late, too late." A smile came upon the dear missionary's face. I waited to hear what he would say. It was this: "My dear young woman, it does not matter so much where you let your light shine, just so you let your light shine where you are."

One is reminded of John Wesley's rule, "Do all the good you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can." In the General Rules which he made for his followers, he taught them to do good "of every possible sort to all men." Wesley is often spoken of as a great preacher, evangelist, and organizer. However, as one reads his journal which he kept with such scrupulous care, one can but marvel at his concern and labors for human welfare. He established an employment bureau, a loan fund, a medical dispensary, and even published a book of remedies for various physical ills. When he was past seventy he trudged through snow on London streets to gather funds for the poor. One of his last letters was aimed at the encouragement of prison reform. He followed the example of his Master who "went about doing good."

He had caught the vision of the sanctity of common life, and we too must catch it. All life is sacred, and all of life. Regardless of time or place or circumstance, we must live every moment as in the presence of Christ and with every breath and thought and effort seek to glorify God.

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